

# *The View*

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association  
Fall 2005

Volume XVIII

Smyrna, GA



*“God As We Understand Him”*

The Ridgeview Alumni Association  
3995 South Cobb Drive – Smyrna, GA 30080

## *Fall Focus: God As We Understand Him*

### **Upcoming Events**

**Gratitude Dinner – November 20, 2005**

**Lighting of Serenity Garden – December 11, 2005**

**New Years Eve Dance – December 31, 2005**

**Spring Fling – Alumni Weekend – June 2006**

*AA and Alanon meeting Friday night*

*Workshops on Saturday*

*Picnic with alumni, families and staff on Sunday*

*Hot dogs, hamburgers, music, activities for kids, swimming, crafts, etc.*

*Poolside 12 Step meeting immediately following the activities.*

### **Other Events**

**Monthly 1<sup>st</sup> Friday Speaker Meetings**

**Dinner and a Movie**

**Alumni Lake Retreat – June 2006**

**Alumni Fall Retreat – September 2006**

**Halloween Dance – October 2006**

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information or join us every Thursday at 5:45pm at Pro North on the Ridgeview Campus.

This issue along with archival copies are available on our website at [www.ridgeviewalumni.com](http://www.ridgeviewalumni.com). The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format; our website will link to download the FREE Adobe reader, allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to be added to our E-mail notification list when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at [steering@bellsouth.net](mailto:steering@bellsouth.net) or contact us thru the Web site, please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you to all those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter; if we have learned anything in recovery it is that *We cannot keep what we have if we do not give it away!*

#### ***EDITORS:***

Dawn B.

Nancy S.

## *Fall Focus: God As We Understand Him*

### *Third Step Prayer from the Big Book of AA p.63*

*God, I offer myself to thee-  
To build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.*

*Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better  
do Thy will.*

*Take away my difficulties, that victory over them  
may bear witness to those I would help of Thy  
Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of Life.*

***May I do Thy Will Always!***

### **God As We Understand Him**

*Submitted by: Anonymous*

I came to AA with a bad attitude toward God and any form of religion. When I was told to find the God of MY understanding, I was lost! I took a step. A journey began. It started with my Home Group as the Higher Power, changed to my Sponsor, changed to The Big Book, then merged into all of the above. Three years sober, I had a Spiritual Experience while involved in a Native American healing ceremony. From that day on I began to feel "a great sense of purpose" as it says on page 130.

Imagine for a moment that your watch had months on it rather than seconds. Saturday and Sunday did not exist. Instead of looking forward to the weekend or to Christmas we would look forward to tomorrow morning, to the Sunrise, to the mystery of a new day. Each and every day is worth celebrating. It holds something special for each of us. In my everyday life I must have a clock and time limits (not deadlines). As I continue to live in sobriety, applying the principles of the Steps to life decisions, my life becomes more spiritual by its very nature.

What more could a person ask for!?

### **Positively Negative**

*Submitted by: Jim M. – The Daily Reader*

We drank for happiness.  
And became unhappy  
We drank for joy  
And became miserable  
We drank for social ability  
And became argumentative

We drank for sophistication  
And became obnoxious  
We drank for friendship  
And made enemies  
We drank for sleep.  
And awakened without rest  
We drank for strength.  
And became weak  
We drank "medicinally"  
And became sick  
We drank to relax  
And got the shakes  
We drank for bravery  
And became afraid  
We drank for confidence  
And became doubtful  
We drank to make conversation  
And slurred our speech  
We drank to feel heavenly  
And felt like hell  
We drank to forget  
And were forever haunted  
We drank for freedom  
And became slaves  
We drank to erase our problems  
And saw them multiply  
We drank to live  
And we invited death.

### **Who's Large and in Charge?**

*Submitted by: George from Georgia*

The first year I was sober I sat around waiting for God to change my circumstances. **Then** I was going to be happy, **then** I was going to have what I wanted, **then** I would live happily ever after. Gradually, I began to "see" more clearly that God was a good God, a heavenly Father, rather than a demanding, impossible-to-please judge. "*The God of my understanding*" is more interested in changing ME than my circumstances. "*God grant me ...the courage to change the things I can (ME).*" "When?" Right here, right now.

"*The God of my understanding*" means I have to understand; understand when I step out of His Favor, I'm on my own, operating in the dark. Proceeding on my own power according to my own timetable is what got me here. When I'm in God's timing, in **God-Synch**, He gives me all the Grace I need. His promise is that at the right time, He will answer my prayers following His plan, not mine. He's been arranging things in my favor these last several years. He shapes events to bring the paths of my son and daughter together with me. I couldn't fake it, I couldn't manipulate them. I tried to force open doors and make relationships happen until there was a

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constant strain and drain on our lives. No joy, no peace, no contentment, no satisfaction. I was drinking myself to death and my children came to the hospital one last time to say "goodbye." Yet, it didn't happen. Years later, I realized it was just like the *23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm* ("goodness and mercy...all the days of my life"). He's guiding and directing me, when I let go and turn my will and my life over to His care.

Think of all the factors that had to fall in place (some feel out-of-place), for me to find "*the God of my understanding.*" I knew I was going to die drunk and there wasn't anything I could do about it. None of this made any sense to me. ***I didn't understand.*** A roommate, Jeff, at the Half Way House read the Bible out loud, prayed with me, explaining. "*Grace is God's unconditional love.*" Later, I was told that I had to know who I was and where I was going or I would drink again. And, that I had to start right where I am, right here, and right now.

There were "clues" in the Bible ("ask, seek, knock") that Faith would heal my terminal end stage liver disease. I prayed that I would "be transformed by the renewing of my mind." You see, when I give "*the God of my understanding,*" praise and stay in an attitude of faith in the midst of my adversities, God's miracle-working power will show up. My God wants me to be a winner, not a whiner. He sees me falling down and getting back up. He sees my resolve, my determination, and **when I do everything I can do** – physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually – that's when my God steps in and **does what I can't do**. He heals my cirrhosis. When our lives are in tough times, we find our Higher Power; we find that we're made in His image.

In my life experiences, I can recognize "impurities" in my character, to CHANGE, to BE what I ought to be. In a similar way, "*the God of my understanding*" uses people in my life – family, friends, especially in AA and here in Ridgeview, as "mirrors" to reveal "lessons" where I "missed the point" by focusing on others (and blaming them) to avoid the spotlight on myself. Sometimes I'm hard on myself because I'm not growing as fast as I would like, not getting what I want when I want it. Then I remember "***Rule 62: Don't take yourself too seriously,***" and lighten up, quit struggling, relax and enjoy life while God's working behind the scenes.

My God loves me so much He won't allow me to go through life in mediocrity. The pressure applied in my life tests me. I may not like it, I may resist it, even run from it, until God brings me back to my attitudes and motives, and I understand the lesson. My God isn't looking for "ability" – he's looking for "availability." He uses ordinary people like you and me to do extraordinary things. He's not looking for education or power, but for a "willing heart." My God puts pressure on me to move

from my "safe" zone to a "faith" zone. He knows how much I can take. He enlarges me. All that's necessary is that I make that decision for an enlarged vision. From simply surviving an alcoholic's death to thriving in living, I have to believe **there are no limits in "*the God of my understanding.*"**

### **Addiction**

*Submitted by: Darrin T.*

My name is addiction.

I'm the most compelling, consuming thing you'll ever know.

I'm also the most patient; I'm omnipotent, all powerful. I can make you do, say, feel whatever I desire.

I can shape your very being.

For me you'll lie and cheat, injure and abuse.

For me you'll betray the people and things that are dearest in your heart.

I have no mercy; I have no compassion - for I'm all that matters.

Yet you love me so much you'd give up your job, your house, your car, your body.

You'd even give up your own child to be with me.

I seduce you with feelings of pleasure and euphoria; I

deceive you with lies of well being and acceptance.

I'll laugh in your face at your pathetic attempts to resist me.

Because once you're mine, you're mine forever.

Completely, mind, body and soul; I want it all – to entertain and amuse me.

And when I'm done, if you're lucky, I'll even let you die.

I am recovery.

There are many who seek me.

There are few who find me.

I am strict and make no concessions.

I demand seriousness and commitment.

I do not bargain, I can't be lied to.

I cannot be manipulated.

I give myself only to those who truly want me and appreciate me.

These select few I love and cherish.

There is nothing I won't do for them.

Under all circumstances, problems, no matter how tragic – I'm there...

In the palm of my hand I hold them.

And if they remain there I keep them safe.

I'm not trying to boast, for I'm neither selfish nor arrogant

– I am simply honest.

I take the lowest of the low and lift them up to high places.

Many say they want and need me.

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They are attracted for awhile, but then they fall away from me.

For there is much I ask of them.

Though there is much I give.

My greatest hope I have for them is that they may live.

### **God as I Understand Him Is a God I am Grateful For**

*Submitted by: Charles Little*

The only power greater than I, that I cared to restore, was usually in the form of smoke I could deeply inhale, pills I could swallow, or distilled spirits that possessed me. I thought I was spiritual. After all, I had my deeply held sarcastic and cynical beliefs, and I thought I was always right about everything. Of course, rarely did I have anything remotely approaching what I would call serenity or peace of mind, but I had the comfort of the familiarity and the perverse pleasure of driving my soul into the darkest thoughts I could muster. That doesn't sound very pleasurable, yet when you're in the midst of full-blown addiction, as one donor cycle demigod I know likes to say, "We'll find a rut, furnish it, and then live in it".

My higher power was frequently called on from the trenches, like when I needed to call into work sick when I was still seeing double, or the guard wouldn't answer me from behind the reinforced glass, or a blackout had left me wondering why a certain someone didn't want to talk anymore. But after the prayers and the fortunate redemptions, the spirits and substances either salvaged my wounds or created new ones, and I was on a roll again.

I was, and still am at times, the only God I understood, and God himself was usually discombobulated by years of self-righteous indignation towards the religious right and evangelical hypocrites who talked Christian principles, yet practiced evil-doer deeds and thought police tactics. I enjoyed engaging myself in the debating society, and would become enraged if I encountered anyone who differed from my own opinions. I held what I thought were deep spiritual ideas, and often sought a pseudo-type of enlightenment through chemicals, but my thinking was so befogged that I never set any of the good thoughts into action, and the rest were so altered by a neurotic narcissism that they only made sense to me and my committees. I criticized the world for its lack of compassion, tolerance, and understanding, yet I was just as judgmental towards those I criticized. At the end of my addiction, I was left lonely, reclusive, and bitter. God, as I understood him, didn't care for me. Well, I thought he probably still cared, but he, like I, thought I was a lost cause, and for

all practical purposes I had lost all causes except the one that poured more poison into my soul.

The circumstances of my getting clean and sober are probably no different than most of the other vegetables in the garden, that's not important. After surrendering to the fact that my life had become a pitifully powerless, and exorbitantly unmanageable mess, oft times reinforced by the clinical assistant pointing out how long it was til the next smoke break, little things started to happen. Little coincidences started occurring, God-incidences, as he let himself appear in other people and situations, things that made me scratch my head and wonder. Life started to change as the detoxification intensified.

While in treatment, I began to wonder, why were prior relations such as the therapist I chose-- the man I talked to about Buddhist recovery, the friend I hadn't seen in 20 years, the musician I used to play with who was visiting his son, my brother's ex-girlfriend's sister, my two roommates who played guitar-- why were all these people showing up at the place where I was getting sober? God started making himself understood, there were no burning bushes, no white chips turned into "bling", no detox water into wine, but he was there in the eyes, and words of nearly every person I met in recovery. All this continued as I left treatment, and it still goes on today. I ran into a recovering friend I hadn't seen in 15 years, and we went caving recently; a fellow band member revealed to me, at a critical time, that he was in the program; a famous musician I had idolized since high school, emailed me with encouragement all during my first year of sobriety; the people I knew from church invited me to play in their band after a chance encounter; another acquaintance shared that he was struggling with addiction after I told of my struggles; my sponsor trusted me enough to house-sit for him, and it just keeps going. Today, I feel that I am in the flow of life. Occasionally, I'm off in a little eddy, or a side stream, but as long as I don't use, the current sweeps me along again.

God made himself understood to me, when an Episcopalian priest wrote on a blackboard, "What you think of me is none of my business", and I repeated that phrase daily in early recovery. I used to drive myself crazy thinking that everyone viewed me a certain way. I was so concerned with what others thought. Gradually, it started becoming clear that as I started to think more of myself, as I sobered up, that it was myself all along who was the one doing the judging, and I thought your thoughts for you, because I hated myself. When I revealed in my "sensitivity," blanketing myself with self-pity, another recovering alcoholic had the nerve to tell me I wasn't "sensitive," I was "touchy" (and I am touchy, so don't mess with me by the way). That put a



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new slant on that deal, being sensitive was no longer an excuse I could revel in, and my touchiness became a defect that reeked of self-importance. When I complained about the debates others would engage me in, it was pointed out that "it takes two to tango", and rather than incessantly arguing, and subsequently becoming ill, I could simply say things like, "You may be right", or "Hmm, I never thought of it that way" and I wouldn't be agreeing or disagreeing at all. God as I understand him is not something that I understand at all, but it is something that I am extremely grateful for. I no longer search for God in the bottle, or the drug. I don't have to search long before he makes his presence known to me in the person of you, or the next alcoholic/addict that he places in my path, at just the right time, the right place, and for the right reason.

**The smallest seed of faith is better than the largest fruit of happiness.**

*--Henry David Thoreau*

### **God Is At the Airport**

*Submitted by: Barbara W.*

After six months in the program, I was still struggling with the third step. No problem with the first two steps. Yes, I could readily admit that I was powerless over alcohol, that my life had become unmanageable and came to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. But turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understood him? I had been taking care of myself all of my life and survived, why did I need to let God control it?

I began praying constantly to God to show me that I could trust him to know what was best for me.

There were small signs along the way. Even sober, things were constantly being misplaced. When I could not locate something, I often would go back to my old behavior, getting all upset and into the drama. That was, until one day I decided to take a couple of deep breaths, calm myself and let it go. Within minutes I found what I had misplaced. This happened many times and every time I let go, I would find what I had lost, or remembered what I could previously not remember. I started to see a pattern emerge. The more I got out of the chaos and turned within, the less stressed and the more blessed I became.

Along with learning tolerance, patience and acceptance of others, I was also learning to be tolerant, patient and accepting of myself. I was starting to get out

of self and my own "E.G.O.", which stands for "Edging God Out". I was now beginning to let God in on a more regular basis and sobriety was getting easier and calmer.

I was, however, still praying for a small miracle to demonstrate to me how to surrender my entire life and will over to the care of God. That day finally came in the guise of a missed flight.

How could I have overslept? I never missed a flight in my life, sober or reeling from too much drink the night before. Why this day?

I awoke at 7:35am for a 9:44am flight to Portland. I jumped out of bed and my head started whirling with all of the old thoughts of beating myself up and going into a frantic rage. Within two minutes, I took a couple of deep breaths and asked myself what would be the worst thing that would happen if I was late for my flight. I calmed myself, showered, dressed and left the house, not really understanding why.

I headed for the airport not knowing if I could make the flight, but determined I would give it my best shot. Arriving at 9:10am, I went straight to the sky cap outside. He informed me that I would have had to be there 45 minutes before takeoff. Of course, I was not. I went inside and used the courtesy phone and was told that the next flight out was at 2:30pm. That was hours away, but I had to get to Portland, Oregon. I booked it and was aggravated that I would have to sit around in the airport for five hours.

As I went through security, I was still aggravated with myself and the imminent wait I had. Riding on the train to the concourse, I made a conscious decision to make the best of the delay. I had been given a pass to Delta's Crown Room and decided I would spend the day there catching up on paperwork and calls.

Entering the concourse, there was my gate, the smoking room and the Crown Room. They were all lined up next to each other – just like 7's on a slot machine. I had hit the jackpot!

I would go to the Crown Room, drink coffee, make calls and work for an hour. Then I would go downstairs, check the flight at the gate, go next door to smoke a cigarette and return to the Crown Room to repeat the pattern several times. I got more done in those four hours than I had in the last week.

The day turned out to be a good day after all, mainly because I was not resisting God's plan for me. I arrived too late in Portland to attend the AA meeting I planned to go to, but that was okay. I got the best meeting I could have gone to, I got the message that I can turn my will and life over to the care of the God of my understanding and all is well. And so it is.

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### **Deniaddiction**

*Submitted by: Evan Levy*

I don't have a problem  
It's not like I'm under attack.  
I don't have an addiction  
It's not like I'm smoking crack.  
It's just marijuana  
It's really ok.  
I don't have an addiction  
I don't do it everyday.  
Now I do it everyday  
But not in the morning.  
I don't have an addiction  
So you shouldn't be in warning.  
Now I smoke it all day  
But I'm not sniffing cocaine.  
I don't have an addiction  
Ok, maybe trying it won't give me pain.  
Hey, it's not that bad  
I'll just do it on the weekends, ok?  
See I'm not addicted  
Well that's what I say.

Deny addiction  
It's hard to admit  
Rely on addiction,  
It's hard to realize it.

No hard drugs  
I'm going to be a responsible teen.  
Ok just a little bit of heroin  
It won't be too mean.

I don't have an addiction.  
Get the f... off my back.  
Stop saying I have a problem  
I'm not smoking crack.  
It's not that bad  
A drug here and there.  
An addiction? Not me  
Why would you even care.

Deny addiction  
It's a bad time  
Rely on addiction  
It started with a dime.

Oh my god  
What have I become?  
I do drugs everyday  
Look at me, I'm a bum.  
I just don't understand  
I thought I would be ok.

Wait, I don't have an addiction  
I just need to stop doing it every day.

Deny addiction  
They can destroy  
Retry addiction  
Drugs are not a toy.

I don't have an addiction  
Even though I hold a needle in my hand.  
I don't have a problem  
Even though I need help to stand.

Deny addiction  
Stop the denial  
Realize addiction  
So you could once again smile.

### **My God – Resistance to Awesome**

*Submitted by: Sean Cleary*

The understanding of my Higher Power has changed and grown since I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous. The whole "God idea" seemed radical to me at first and my intuition told me to resist. I thought I had to understand God perfectly before I could continue on with the steps. The longer I stay in Alcoholics Anonymous, the more I realize that it is impossible to understand my Higher Power totally. God reveals more of Himself to me a little bit at a time if I pay attention.

Bill Wilson wrote in the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" that "First, Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe in anything." Thankfully, I had a concept of God from my early childhood which I used as a starting point.

The book goes on to state, "Second, to get sober and to stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of Step Two right now." That was a relief because it meant that I could continue forward even though I was confused about God.

"Third, all you really need is a truly open mind." To have an open mind has been an integral part of my program. Without that I wouldn't have had the freedom to explore all the possibilities of a spiritual remedy. I had to be willing to let go of my old ideas and take a chance on something different.

I'm not sure if I understand my Higher Power any more now than when I first started on this journey. I'll tell you this, though; I have started to trust God more and more each day. As a result, my relationship with Him has grown and has filled my heart with a peace and serenity I've never felt before. I feel safe to go out in the world and just be myself. I don't have to be the actor that the "Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous" describes.

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God loves me as He loves each and every one of us. What a wonderful insight. My old understanding of God was that He was checking His list and checking it twice; just to see if I was naughty or nice. And just like Santa Claus, if I had too many black check marks, then I was doomed.

The Higher Power I have today is a loving God. There are too many coincidences that I have witnessed for there to be no existence of God's guidance in my life. The old-timers told me that "Coincidences are God's way of remaining anonymous."

I bounced in and out of AA for 10 years, too self-centered to consider God as a solution to my problems. When I was finally desperate enough to give Alcoholics Anonymous a chance, my Higher Power was there waiting for me. I wouldn't know this, however, for quite some time. Looking back, no human power could have set up all the situations that I was about to experience. I was supposed to hear the right things at the right times and only God could know when those times were.

My Higher Power also put people in my life that would help me to find the spiritual growth needed to stay alive in this program.

To show you an example, I'll tell you about my first sponsor. The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous says that most of us wouldn't mix with each other. Well, I'm from Boston and moved to Georgia and found out that I talk funny. Wes, my first sponsor, is from Forsyth, GA and talks with a "bit" of a twang. Normally, we wouldn't mix. We have nothing in common. I love college football and he worships professional hockey. Whoops, other way around. Yet, our common denominator is that we both have alcoholism. Wes (that's two syllables and is pronounced WEIGH'-ess) knew that I wanted to get sober and he knew a way to do that. We worked through the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and along the way became good friends. Now I know all there is to know about the Georgia Bulldogs and can almost say DAWGS!

God knew that I loved sports. He also knew that I needed to laugh because it had been years since I had a hardy laugh. My Higher Power put Wes in my life at the perfect time and place. I don't know if it was my home group, Wes, working the steps, Ridgeview or whatever, but something made me come alive. In actuality, I let God direct the show and this is what He came up with. It's perfect.

Today I don't try to understand God because He is too awesome. My brain couldn't comprehend it. What I try to work on today is trusting in my Higher Power. If I keep doing what I've been doing, I don't have to try and figure it out. God will always be there. If I put God ahead of everything else, especially myself, then it seems that I live a more fulfilling day. My personal

understanding of God is that He is love, He loves me and He is always there.

Oh and just in case I give WEIGH'-ess a copy of this newsletter, Auburn is going to win the SEC this year. Go War Eagles!

### **A New Program**

**Tech Support:** Yes, how can I help you?

**Customer:** Well, after much consideration, I've decided to install Love. Can you guide me through the process?

**Tech Support:** Yes. I can help you. Are you ready to proceed?

**Customer:** Well, I'm not very technical, but I think I'm ready. What do I do first?

**Tech Support:** The first step is to open your Heart. Have you located your Heart?

**Customer:** Yes, but there are several other programs running now. Is it okay to install Love while they are running?

**Tech Support:** What programs are running?

**Customer:** Let's see, I have Past Hurt, Low Self-esteem, Grudge and Resentment running right now.

**Tech Support:** No problem, Love will gradually erase Past Hurt from your current operating system. It may remain in your permanent memory but it will no longer disrupt other programs. Love will eventually override Low Self-esteem with a module of its own called High Self-esteem. However, you have to completely turn off Grudge and Resentment. Those programs prevent Love from being properly installed. Can you turn those off?

**Customer:** I don't know how to turn them off. Can you tell me how?

**Tech Support:** With pleasure. Go to your start menu and invoke Forgiveness. Do this as many times as necessary until Grudge and Resentment have been completely erased.

**Customer:** Okay, done! Love has started installing itself. Is that normal?

**Tech Support:** Yes, but remember that you have only the base program. You need to begin connecting to other Hearts in order to get the upgrades.

**Customer:** Oops! I have an error message already. It says, "Error – Program not run on external components." What should I do?

**Tech Support:** Don't worry. It means that the Love program is set up to run on Internal Hearts, but has not



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yet been run on your Heart. In non-technical terms, it simply means you have to Love yourself before you can Love others.

**Customer:** So, what should I do?

**Tech Support:** Pull down Self-Acceptance; then click on the following files: Forgive-Yourself; Realize Your Worth; and Acknowledge Your Limitations.

**Customer:** Okay, done.

**Tech Support:** Now, copy them to the "My Heart" directory. The system will overwrite any conflicting files and begin patching faulty programming. Also, you need to delete Verbose Self-Criticism from all directories and empty your Recycle Bin to make sure it is completely gone and never comes back.

**Customer:** Got it. Hey! My heart is filling up with new files. Smile is playing on my monitor and Peace and Contentment are copying themselves all over My Heart. Is this normal?

**Tech Support:** Sometimes. For others it takes awhile, but eventually everything gets it at the proper time. So Love is installed and running. One more thing before we hang up. Love is Freeware. Be sure to give it and its various modules to everyone you meet. They will in turn share it with others and return some cool modules back to you.

**Customer:** *Thank you, God!*

### **Spiritual Freedom**

*Submitted By: Amy D.*

All of my life I have had a concept of who and what I thought God was. It was everything that was instilled in me as a child when our family would go to church. I had what I thought was a good spiritual foundation.

I married while in college and continued going to church like a good little girl should do. After two years of marriage, my husband passed away due to a massive heart attack from complications of juvenile diabetes. This is when I found out what my spiritual foundation was really made up of. I can truly say that this is when I lost faith in God. I quit going to church and praying. It wasn't for me anymore.

After going through a few extremely painful years, I met my current husband and we began dating. He drank and there didn't seem to be a problem with my drinking. However, shortly after our marriage, he began to travel a lot and other stress factors entered my life. After the stress of a long day, I would have a few glasses of wine to unwind. As with any alcoholic, one was never enough. I had decided at this point that God had done nothing for me in my life but cause me pain,

stress, and frustration. As my drinking progressed, so did my distance from God. I then found that if I took pain pills that I wouldn't have to drink as much but I would get the same feeling. This spiraled my life out of control until I entered Ridgeview and said I am an alcoholic and a drug addict.

Through my own admission at being an alcoholic and addict and through the work of the steps, I have now begun a different path; a path I had never known before in my spiritual life.

At first, I was like, "Okay God, show me what to do." I still had the mentality of "I want it, and I want it now!" My sponsor told me that it didn't work that way and we began the steps. Over a period of a year, God has come into my life not as the extreme deity that I grew up thinking He was. Now, He is my personal confidant, friend and leader – He will never take me down a path that I am not supposed to take.

Looking back on my life, I now know that everything that has happened to me was supposed to happen. He will guide me through both the good and bad times. Even in the bad times, there is a lesson to be learned and it will make me into the person that he has intended me to be. I feel so blessed to have this freeing relationship with God now. You always hear the phrase, "Happy, Joyous and Free". I can say that God has set me free from my addiction and pain and I am the happiest that I have ever been in my life.

Being overly preoccupied with ourselves stunts our spiritual growth just as it limits all we do. We cannot realize our full potential when we are concentrating on our desires or fears. We cannot hear the voice of our Inner Guide when we are listening to the voice of our anxiety. Our recovery can be measured by our progress in getting out of ourselves.

That's why we are asked to turn our will and our life over to the care of God. The relinquishment of self to a Higher Power is the key to personal freedom. Our addictions are only symptoms of our underlying disease -- the disease of self-centeredness. Surrendering the self automatically puts us in touch with the power of the universe -- our Creator.

I ask God to relieve me of the preoccupation with my self.

***From the Book: In God's Care by Karen Casey***

## *Fall Focus: God As We Understand Him*

### **Am I Really Here?**

*Submitted By: Anonymous*

**Am I really here?** I have asked myself this question since one year ago, when I realized I was in the middle of a fight that would decide the rest of my life, day by day. Where I was, in denial, in active addiction and use, unhappy, without hope and so scared that I was at a point in my drink and using that I was sure I was far away from. Like a ship that breaks through fog and crashes upon rocks they thought they had yet to reach, my life was wrecking itself and I had been too drunk to see the approaching danger that was fully upon me.

**Am I really here?** I have asked myself upon waking in strange places, in jail, in sadness and misery that weighed upon me with such force all I could do was cry. Yes, Jay, you are really here at all these places because this is where your disease brings you. You are really here and this is as good as it will ever get. I remember thinking that and the fear of not knowing anything better, the same fear that assured me anything good I created I would mess up. Life had to be better, there had to be a way that I could avoid such guaranteed disaster. There had to be someplace better for me, I had no idea how to get there, though; I was lost and far from safety and happiness. Clarity had come to me, but imagine me trying to explain that the message I have been getting, that "I can not drink and all I could ever want will be there", had been coming from God. Like a drunken prophet, it would seem crazy to most but I believed with total faith and devotion and I still do. I talked with my therapist before leaving Atlanta. Confused, I asked him, "In AA they say don't make any changes in the first year, focus on sobriety and maintain what you have, what about me and what I am doing?" He smiled lovingly and spoke softly to me. "Jay you have nothing here, you are in limbo, now you move and you stick with this new job, house and life for a year. You're giving yourself something to stick to for a year, do that then see."

I will never be that scared again. My life had been building to that point of impact and I had chosen not to heed any warnings, I think that I was always headed to that point and now I am glad that I reached it when I did, one year ago. **Am I really here,** I asked myself the first day of treatment, and I was and I really needed to be, and it was the only way I was going to be able to learn what I was facing and how to deal with that.

**Am I really here?** I wonder as I read this to my 89 year old grandma, for I have learned that people who love you also may understand you or try to in ways that you never would have expected them to. You find the closest of allies in those you may have never asked or even thought to ask, but they are there, at least grandma

is, trying hard as she can to understand her grandson and his struggle to be the man she always knew he would be. **Am I really here,** I have asked her with tears in my eyes hoping that she sees what I mean is, "Am I the man inside that my grandfather was, that her father, my namesake was, that is what is in me, that kind of great character and virtue?" Yes Jay you are in there, and coming out more and more each day.

**Am I really here?** Writing this on the porch of the house I have spent a good deal of my summer in, overlooking the sunset on Block Island, with a lovely girl who tries so hard to understand me and this disease. Yes Jay you are really here.

One year later, no drink, no drugs, **am I really here?** Just one year? Reminded by my sponsor that I have several steps to finish my work on. Pushed by a friend ten years sober to make a commitment to speak or run a meeting, reminding me that now is when my work in my program starts. I am only here, at one year, still learning so much everyday in the operating room while I work. Here is good, not perfect and not where I ideally want to be, I want a house, a territory of my own, I want my pilot's license and a Porsche. But I have not gotten to those things yet; part of realizing that I am really here is seeing where I came from, but more so it is now about seeing where I am, right now. Being aware of what I needed to do at the moment, being satisfied with what I have, seeing that if I can know where I am, really am, then I can plan where I need to go. I am happy, I don't get angry much, I am able to do good for others, I have my dog next to me, I have a year sober, that's all, just one, but thanks to this past year I have a chance at tomorrow and maybe the day after that too. But we'll deal with that when it comes. I have a year and I have today. I am so lucky to have this chance again at life, and thank you to all of you who get this and have helped me to get here. You have played a role in this year, we may not be close as we once were but you are all in my thoughts and I wish the best for everyone.

**Am I really here,** yes Jay right now you are. Learn from it, take it all in, enjoy now and be mindful of the present, it's all you have, it's right now. God bless and thank you all.

**Nothing is good or bad but thinking makes it so.**

*--Shakespeare*

# Fall Focus: God As We Understand Him

Remember hitting your bottom? Do you remember that moment when you first began to feel some hope? Looking back can you remember those angels who appeared at that precise moment when you needed help the most? I can.

I can also remember the abject fear of, "How am I going to pay for this?" No insurance, no real savings, no trust fund, no golden benefactor. Scared, having hit my bottom, finally able to ask for help. I was in a safe place. The rest would just have to take care of itself.

Treatment costs money, real money. Programs, therapies, prescriptions, food, housing and all the while life continues to go on outside without us. As active members of the Ridgeview Alumni Association our fund raising goal is an endowment fund that will one day be able to help financially that person currently in treatment. Whether it's more time in treatment, another couple of days in a halfway house, medications, daycare so the patient can make it to the program that week, the needs can be overwhelming at times. We all know how powerful a helping hand at that critical moment can make or break a spirit.

Our goal for the Endowment Fund has to be set high if we are to be able to generate any kind of meaningful income. To date we have raised \$25,000 towards our first \$500,000. Every single dollar raised goes into an asset management account over which the Alumni Steering Committee has sole control.

When the day comes, and it will, that we are in a financial position to begin offering grants to patients, a review committee will be established. This group will be comprised of active Steering Committee members who have demonstrated a record of service, and a representative from the hospital. The committee will review the requests and make grants based on need, the patient's participation in their own recovery and the patient's treatment team's input.

Obviously we are a ways down the road from making any grants. The next several years are about increasing awareness of our project, raising and investing the donations that come our way. Today, you can make a difference in the life of that person who is still out there.

Won't you make a commitment to be someone's angel, just for today? We have.

## Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

- Yes**, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery \_\_\_\_\_ years and would like to give back \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Yes**, I am not an Alumni; however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397.

## Serenity Garden - Memorial Brick Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 lines / 14 characters per line)

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

\$25.00 per brick

\* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association, Bricks

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397

*Fall Focus: God As We Understand Him*