

Who is The Unknown God?

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Dedication

This written project is dedicated to my younger brother Chris Emmerich, who was born 12-13-1965, and died 11-5-2013 at the age of 47. The coroner reported the cause of death as "alcohol." His life's story was riddled with lengthy incarcerations due to alcohol related offenses. The latter part of his life was marred by an alcohol related accident that paralyzed the left side of his body and robbed him of his ability to shred on guitar. After losing the ability to play music his life spiraled downward to his death. It is our hope that his life was not a waste and that his story will influence and motivate others in a positive direction who suffer from the same addiction.

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ONE



Brief Introduction to
the Unknown God

ONE

Brief Introduction to the Unknown God

In ancient times many people adhered to the belief that there was a great God somewhere but that this God was not knowable by men. This unknown God was an idea which they attributed to either the God of the Jews whose name was not uttered, or to any of the gods of superstition who they neither knew nor ascribe a name or title to. It wasn't uncommon for these people to use the expression, "I swear by the Unknown God." Archaeologists have also found altars that were erected on the Grecian peninsula and western Turkey with inscriptions that when translated read something along the lines of "To the Unknown God."

In the sixth century B.C.E., when the philosopher Epimenides lived, there was a plague which went throughout all of Greece. The Greeks thought that they must have offended one of their gods, so they began offering sacrifices on altars to all their various deities. When nothing worked they figured there must be a God who they didn't know and whom they must somehow appease. So Epimenides came up with a plan. He released hungry sheep into the countryside and instructed men to follow the sheep to see where they would lie down. He believed that if the sheep were to lie down it would be a sign from God that the place was sacred. At each spot where the sheep tired and

Brief Introduction

laid down, the Athenians built an altar and sacrificed the sheep on it. Afterwards when the plague stopped they attributed it to this unknown God accepting their sacrifice.

Apollodorus, Philostratus and Pausanias wrote about the unknown God as well. For them the unknown God was not so much a specific deity, but a placeholder for any god that existed in their imaginations but whose name was unknown. However, the unknown God that this book examines is the God that creation is attributed to, but who remains unknown to so many. The reason why God remains unknown to many isn't because He doesn't want to be known, but because people choose not to know Him. The DNA in a human body contains uniquely coded information that is the architectural blueprint for each individual. And any software engineer will tell you that such code does not write itself or evolve from nowhere it has to be written by a "Coder." This evidence is proof that a God who creates exists.... but who is He, what is his name?

The purpose of this book is to take the "Un" out of the unknown God that often resides in the hearts and minds of many who attempt to find sobriety through twelve step programs. Many who take up permanent residence at the altar of the unknown God are there because they like having no responsibility in a relationship with Him. He remains a mystery and yet they feel their work is done, no other effort is necessary. They don't feel a need to know Him, only a need to acknowledge his existence. Others find themselves there because it's the place where their journey started

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but they don't know how to proceed. They don't know what to do about the unknown nature; knowing there's a God but not knowing who He is. To them God exists only as a generic concept. This project was undertaken in an effort to help the person who wants to know who the unknown God is to do so. If you feel that this is where you started but are somehow stuck now, be assured that God has revealed Himself to mankind and desires for us to know Him. He wants to remove the unknown from the unknown, the mystery from our hearts, and be found by us when we honestly seek Him. Who is the unknown God? Let's find out.

Brief Introduction

TWO



What Does it Profit?

TWO

What Does it Profit?

A famous man once said, “What does it profit a person if they gain the whole world and yet lose their soul?” This profound question will be asked several times throughout this examination of the twelve step recovery program and the search for the unknown God. It is the contention of this author that the God issue found in this program and in particular the first three of its steps, addresses this very question. Some people may say, “I don’t see it.” However many who have worked the program honestly, and without prejudice prior to investigation, have found not only sobriety but a spiritual revelation and regeneration through experiencing the fact that a relationship with a real personal God is possible and profitable. Many people have found that by following the directions given in the twelve steps, and by honestly evaluating their instructions and meaning through the commentary of the Big Book, that the bondage of addiction they once lived in can be overcome.

The Unknown God was written by someone who was once a drug addict and alcoholic, and has also experienced the freedom of parole from these addictions through an honest implementation of the twelve steps in the “Anonymous” program. The correct and honest understanding of the Higher Power/God issue found in the first three steps is essential to the working of the steps which come after them. Just as the road to

What Does it Profit?

sobriety can be a difficult struggle, the resolution of the God issue can be long and difficult as well. However the struggle and effort are well worth it.

In 1,623AD the famous French philosopher, mathematician, and physicist, Blaise Pascal, proposed an argument in philosophy known today as “Pascal’s Wager.” It charted new territory in probability theory, marked the first formal use of decision theory, and anticipated future philosophies such as existentialism, pragmatism and voluntarism. It asserts that humans bet with their lives that God either exists or does not. Non-participation is not an option. Pascal argues that a rational person should live as though God exists and seek to believe in God. If God does actually exist, such a person will have only a finite loss, whereas they stand to receive infinite gains (as represented by eternity in Heaven) and avoid infinite losses (eternity in Hell). His argument concluded that based on mathematical probability, the potential gain in the wager so exponentially outweighs any sacrifices, that a rational person would wager that “God is.” His argument also concluded that without God “all is uncertainty.” Reason, science, religion, man’s purpose; they’re all lacking.

It is this author’s opinion that Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, saw the wager the same as Pascal. The foundation of the program relies on the pursuit and resolution of the Higher Power/God issue in each person’s life. The focus of this book will be centered on that; successfully identifying God as referred to in the first three steps. There are many recovery programs based on numerous vices; alcohol, drugs,

What Does it Profit?

gambling, over eating, over spending, sexual deviants and many others. However they all employ the same twelve steps. Therefore, the following chapters are meant to challenge and encourage the reader to seriously consider how they're embracing the God issue because, "What does it profit a person if they gain the whole world and yet lose their soul?"

What Does it Profit?

THREE



A Quick Look at
the Program

THREE

A Quick Look at the Program

Before proceeding to the main points it seems like a good place to share some observations about the twelve steps of the recovery program. For many this is not new but it is a necessary review before going forward. The steps are known to most but certain important observations sometimes get missed along the way. Again it should be noted that although the program was originally started to address alcoholism it has been used to “restore us to sanity” by those suffering from many other addictions. In the two places where the words address the alcoholic we have substituted the word sinner, for the sake of addressing all who suffer. And let’s face it; we could all work the program of sinners anonymous because we all miss the mark in multiple ways.

Here are the twelve steps broken down into three categories. The first three steps not only address the addiction which is the partial cause of our suffering, but also the God issue, or lack of God in our lives, which is an additional cause of suffering. I believe this suffering is the result of us not being designed to be separated from the love of God. We leave this love behind when we chose to travel through life without Him.

Get Honest about God

1-We admitted we were powerless over sin – that our lives had become unmanageable.

The Program

2-Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3-Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood

Him.

Even though step two addresses God in an abstract, impersonal way, "A power greater than ourselves," step three quickly changes that by saying, "Turn our will and our lives over to the care of God." Caring is something that one person does for another. It is a personal act. The "as we understood Him" clause is not a loophole to be exploited so as to remain impersonal but rather it's a call to learn about God and to get to know Him. Even though step two speaks of God in an impersonal way I believe it's there because that's where some folks need to start. We must first come to grips with the fact that "God is." Once we have done that then we can proceed on the lifetime adventure of getting to know "Who" this God is.

The next six steps (4-9) are where we get honest about ourselves, our defects in character and how we have wronged others. This is usually a very difficult look in the mirror for most people. This is where we get honest about ourselves, but it comes after we have gotten honest about God. Notice in steps five, six and seven the action of admission is personal, from one to another. The action of removal is personal as well. "Asked Him" makes this personal too. Step seven doesn't say, "Asked it." These steps about self honesty necessitate that the God issue has been dealt with or at least begun prior to their exercise.

The Program

Get Honest about ourselves

- 4-Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5-Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6-Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7-Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8-Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- 9-Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

The last three steps are a continuation of the honesty exercised in the first nine steps. Step eleven absolutely directs us not to camp on our original premise from step two that God exists, but to advance in the areas of knowing who this God is, what his will is, and how He wants to interact with me. How does He want me to apply his will in my life this day; “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” And last of all the logical conclusion; Go and share the joys of the freedom of being paroled from the incarceration of addiction with others who still suffer¹.

Continue in honesty

10-Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

¹ 12 Traditions #5

The Program

11-Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12-Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other sinners, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Once we have experienced the good news that freedom from addiction is possible through a relationship with God, we are called to share that good news with others still in bondage. It is also implied that we need to ask God to empower us to boldly share this good news. There's no greater joy than for a person who has experienced this regeneration of life, to share it with someone who is in the same condition as they themselves once were, and to see that person experience the same good news; a restoration to sanity and gratitude towards God.

FOUR



The First Three Steps

FOUR

The First Three Steps

We already touched on the first three steps in the last chapter and shared observations about the God issue. We admitted we have a problem, admitted we did not have the power to change, admitted that the only power that can change us is greater than ourselves, and admitted that this power is God, and only He can change us if we humble ourselves and are willing to allow Him to do so. To me these things are obvious but some I feel miss critical points. Sometimes people don't want to believe in or bow down before God in this way. Therefore, in my opinion, it appears that some people play games with the intention of the program's founders relating to the God issue. How did Bill hope we would resolve it? The answer to this question will be addressed in more detail in the chapter "The Big Book."

When we're not honest with the resolution of the God issue it is usually because of a prejudice prior to investigation. However, this intellectual block actually starts in the hardness of people's hearts. It's usually spawned by prejudicial upbringing, bad experiences with religiosity, or bitterness derived from trials in life; "If there is a God who is good why would He let bad things happen to me?" These kinds of things affect the heart in a way that brings about an "I don't want to believe" attitude. The "I don't want to" of the heart is usually much stronger than any other intellectual persuasion that might be introduced, even if the "I don't

The First Three Steps

want to” person’s life is falling apart and failing at every turn. It seems to me that in such cases only “The Great Physician,” God, is able to perform the kind of heart surgery needed to make it possible for the jaded person to possess the ability to overcome the “don’t want to” and begin to believe in, and trust God.

These are a few methods that some use in approaching the God issue of the first three steps:

1. *The Atheist*-The atheist really doesn’t want to believe and searches for anything that will support the desire to not have to believe in God. Many people in this camp will identify a higher power as that which is impersonal and or a created object. This camp never really admits to God in the way that the program’s founders intended.

2. *The Agnostic*-This person has done the minimum required to start which is, to not reject the possibility that God is. When the atheist moves to this camp he has taken a critical step forward because in order to start the program correctly a person first has to believe that God is. This can’t be done until the possibility that God exists is acknowledged. This is the place where many of us start, but isn’t the place where we should stop.

3. *The Idolater*-Some cultures throughout time have created Gods of myth and legend, such as Greek and Egyptian mythology, and have created images in the honor of their gods. Some religions such as Hinduism are polytheistic as well, believing in a plurality of gods. However, this is not being advocated by twelve step programs if my observations are correct. After the second step, God is referred to in singular personal form. In the Big book chapter: We Agnostics, pg.49, we see

The First Three Steps

that the God of twelve steps anonymous is creator and everything else is created. However, the idolater, because of his superstition, allows in an indirect way the possibility of the true God who created the universe to exist. This could also be a place to start but not to stop. The next chapter titled "The Altar of the Unknown God" will address this very point.

4. *The Believer*-This person not only believes that God is, but that He is also a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.² The challenge I feel that we should all embrace is in answering the questions, "Has God revealed Himself to mankind or has He remained hidden? If God has revealed Himself how has He done that? If God has revealed Himself shouldn't we interact with Him based on that revelation?"

My number one objective is to encourage people to seek God as He has already revealed Himself. The difference between the first three examples in this chapter and the fourth, is the first three have a solely intellectual approach; knowing ABOUT God. Where as the fourth is a heart, intellect and spiritual one; Knowing God. Knowing God and the power of restoration to sanity and life needs to be our objective because, "What does it profit a person if they gain the whole world and yet lose their soul?"

² Hebrews 1:6