

GETTING "OUT" OF OURSELVES

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Unfortunately, I lived a big part of my life focused on "ME". Most all of my decisions were made with the thought "what is this decision going to do to/for me?". My choices and decisions were made around myself--only thinking of what the ramifications to others would be secondarily. Now, don't get me wrong, in order to help others we must first take care of ourselves but there is a difference between taking care of ourselves first and being of service to others.

When I was drinking and using drugs I looked at my life as something "happening to me" instead of "happening for me". That thought of where and how I was going to get my next drink or drug overpowered any thought I may have had of "doing a good turn" for someone else. Stopping the bad habits of drinking and drugging began the journey of turning my life around--but that was only a part of it!

As I've written about before, after I had been clean and sober for 6 years I found the courage to sign up for the chaplaincy program at my church. It was a decision I was unsure about and wondered, after I

had made the commitment, why I had done it. The training program lasted for several weekends. I remember, when the first Saturday morning rolled around, thinking "I just won't go". That had been my usual way of life and thinking for many years. Something, though, kept telling me--"Do This!". I had second thoughts all the way to the church as I rode over there that morning.

After that first training session I seemed to be having a change in my thought processes. We had had our first instruction on how to pray with others and had all "practice" prayed with others who had signed up for the program. I found myself thinking about and empathizing with the person I was praying with instead of thinking about myself.

Finally, after the weekends of training and a weekend Chaplains' Retreat I was deemed "ready" to pray "for real" with people attending church. I recall the first person who came to me--we prayed and shared some tears. For me, a life changing event! I felt good about myself, not because I was thinking "me, me, me" but because I had helped someone else feel better about their life. For those few minutes we had shared, I had felt a "oneness"--not only with the other person but with a Power much greater than "little me"!

I was a church chaplain for several years. I was fortunate to be able to pray with many people at the church and also visit hospitals and pray with those who were ill and their family members and friends. Each time I felt more of that feeling of peace and oneness. I learned to "get out" of myself and how to be of service to others.

I now try to carry that feeling into all aspects of my life. Whenever I feel the "poor, poor pitiful me" syndrome coming on, I try to think of how I can make someone else's life a little better. It doesn't have to be praying with someone--it can be praying for someone or a simple smile or friendly "hello". We never know how far reaching those "little things" can be!

And, as I have closed with some many times before, getting out of ourselves can make our lives better and lives of those around us better. And, to me, that's now what life is all about! It all works together for making this world a little bit better place!

God bless--

All my best--

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