

[**Dick B.**: The following article is from "Your Faith" magazine. It is an article which A.A. literature had said was lost. AAs speculated that Dr. Bob wrote the article. He didn't. He was interviewed by D. J. Defoe in September 1939 for "Your Faith" Magazine. And the interview disappeared from view for years and years as far as AAs were concerned. Yet in the interview, Dr. Bob told how he read the Bible with patients. He told how they came to trust God. He told how he had been cured by prayer. He spoke about the healings of Jesus Christ. And he was talking about the many drunkards whom he had been able to help once he himself prayed, turned to God for help, and was cured--a priceless article free of the editing and revision of others who might have doubted!]

D. J. Defoe, "I Saw Religion Remake a Drunkard," in *Your Faith* magazine, September 1939, 84-88

http://silkworth.net/aahistory/drbob/drbob_interview_fm_0939.html ; accessed 2/22/12

Through Liquor, this physician had lost his practice, his reputation and his self-respect. Then one night in a gathering in a private home, he found the way of escape.

WHEN a doctor starts drinking, he's usually on the skids for keeps. His profession gives him so much privacy, so great exposure to temptation both from liquor and from drugs, and his need of a stimulant to lift him from depression becomes so extreme, that many a good doctor has dropped into oblivion for no cause other than his own thirst for drink.

I could tell you about more than one doctor who came to no good end through liquor. Their stories are alike in their early furtiveness, then a brazen attitude of liquor - might -do- things-to some-men - but - I'm-different, then a broken desperation to try to keep up appearances and pretend nothing has happened, and finally exposure—and failure—and disgrace. One brilliant ex-surgeon a suicide; another exile from home; two others forgotten by their friends; so runs the history.

But Dr. X handled his liquor problem differently. He came close enough to degradation to see how the jaws of hell reaching out for him. But then something interfered and saved him.

Today Dr. X—and I dare not give his name, or even the name of the city, for reasons you will soon discover—is alive and happy and is probably a better and more popular doctor than ever before. What saved his life and reputation? What force made him into a new man?

It was simply religion, brought home to him in a way he could use it. Simply the new habit of living his religion, and the discovery that he could utilize the power of prayer.

We used to see Dr. X around a lot. He was cheery, straightforward, friendly, and successful. His field was a particularly intricate form of surgery and he did well at it.

Then for quite a while we missed him. I saw his wife now and then, and noticed—even a man can things like that—that she seemed a little shabby and not especially happy.

We began to hear ugly rumors. That's bad for any doctor. We heard he was losing his practice. When a doctor begins drinking, not many people are willing to trust their own lives to his skill with a knife.

Last year I met Dr. X for the first time in several years. He was a new Dr. X. Straight as an Indian. Clean eyes. An honest I-can-lick-the-world look in his face. He gripped my hand in a vise and said hello in a way that gave you something to tie to.

We were at a party. Someone offered Dr. X a drink. Then I remembered what had happened to him and wondered what he would do.

"I don't drink," he said evenly. "Some men can take a drink, or two drinks, and stop. I can't. I had that ability once, but not now. If I'd take as much as a swallow of alcohol now, I'd disappear—and you wouldn't see me for three weeks."

From him and from others I got his whole story, a bit here, a bit there. Here it is.

He had been drinking for longer than anyone but his wife suspected. For a while he was able to keep the matter a secret. But he missed a couple of appointments and got into some trouble. First his competitors knew it. Then his friends around the hospital got wise. Finally even his oldest patients began to leave him.

He had always been dignified and aloof, and when he was straight you hesitated to go up to him and tell him he was drinking too much. Usually he drank alone, silently, hungrily, in a sodden fashion of one who wants to forget. Just a deadly, steady sopping up of the poison. It was ghastly. In his saner moments he must have known the way he was headed. But a stubborn pride—and pride of that sort in a wayward person is a terrible thing—held him from seeking help.

Finally a friend he trusted got him to attend a little meeting in a living room one evening. It was a simple affair. Not dress-up at all. Here was a factory foreman who looked happier than almost anybody in town. When the time came to talk he told how he had been cured of drunkenness by prayer. His wife told how unbelievably happy their life was now. They didn't have much money—you could see that—but they had something that money alone had never brought them. They had love, and self-respect, and they had each other.

Dr. X was surprised to find that everyone in this little group had some sort of a fight to make, and had won. He began to look at these people in a new way. They had been weak and now they were strong. Unconsciously he began to envy them.

He surprised himself by starting to say something. He admitted he had a tremendous hunger for liquor, and sometimes it got him down. He found that just merely talking about his trouble seemed to bring relief. As long as you conceal your difficulties, no one can help you. But once you bring your trouble out in the open, you can invite help and encouragement from friends. And you can benefit by the strengthening power of prayer.

Merely getting on his knees and asking for help wasn't the whole story of Dr. X's reformation. Many a drunk knows there's a wide difference between promising to go straight and sticking to it!

What enabled him to hold fast to his resolution was the discovery that he, who had just started to climb back to sobriety and respectability, had the ability to help other desperate and disheartened drunks to live decent lives too.

In fact, that's a big part of the cure. When Dr. X gets an inebriate started on a new life of decency, he sees to it that the man gets on his feet now and then and talks to other people in the same predicament. Telling yourself and the world that you're going to go straight helps you to remind your subconscious mind that you are going straight.

There have been a lot of ex-drunks that have come within Dr. X's influence since that fateful night he was turned back from a drunkard's grave. Forty-three of them, no less, owe their

new lives to him. He'll leave a party or a dinner, almost leave an operation, to go and sit up all night with some drunk he probably never saw before but who he knows needs help.

He has worked out a little system. Usually he puts the drunk to bed in a hospital, where he can sleep off his liquor quietly but can't get any more. There the sick man—for a drunk really is a sick man—receives regular care, and hot meals, and also some measure of discipline and restraint. There he has privacy, and time to think.

"But you can't do much for a man until he hits bottom and bounces back up, can you?" I asked.

"A man doesn't necessarily have to hit bottom, but he has to come close enough to it to see where he's going if he doesn't stop drinking," replied Dr. X quietly. "And he's got to want to be helped before we can do much with him or for him"

When a drunk in the hospital starts to sober up, Dr. X closes the door and starts to talk to him.

"I know where you hide your bottles," he'll say. "I know every sneaky little thing you do to get liquor when you're not supposed to have any. I've been there myself. And I want to tell you, my fine young friend, it's getting you nowhere. You're rotten. You're ashamed of yourself. Now let's do something about it."

So there in that white, silent hospital room they read the Bible together. Then they pray. Very simply. First the Doctor, then, falteringly, the man himself. He finds his voice gains in confidence. He finds it is easy to talk to God, and talk out loud. He finds a huge load is lifted off his chest. He begins to feel he could hold his head up again. He gets a fresh look at the man he might be. The whole idea becomes real and feasible to him. He becomes enthusiastic and eager about going straight. He promises to read the Bible, and Dr. X leaves him.

Then, like as not, the sick man slips up, and badly. Success is not that easy. Those nerves that have been accustomed to bossing the mind and the body can't be straightened out without a last tough fight. The patient begs for just one more last little drink, and when the nurse refuses, he is angry at Dr. X and may storm about and threaten to go home. Fortunately, the foresighted Dr. X had carefully removed the patient's pants and shoes and locked them up in his own locker in the surgeons' room of the hospital.

And then, because he knows the fight the sick man is going through, Dr. X comes back in time to bring new comfort and new cheer and to again call forth the searching and ever-available help of prayer. And in a couple of weeks the man, rested and refreshed and with the eyes alight as a result of decent living, goes home to his friends and his family that had almost given him up for dead.

"No, I don't dare let you tell about this," Dr. X said to me when I asked him for a signed interview.

"We can't publicize these cures. These men are outside the realm of every day medicine. They have tried everything and been given up as hopeless. We don't succeed every time ourselves. We can't brag. Every case is a new battle."

"But if word got out that we can do anything at all for a drunk, then derelicts would come into this town by the TRAINLOAD. We couldn't handle them. We couldn't handle a dozen. Two is a lot. One at a time is plenty. I can't talk to one of these fellows for more than an hour or two without feeling spent and tired, unless I talk like a parrot, and talking like a parrot wouldn't do them any good".

"Do you remember when Christ turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched me?' and some woman confessed she had touched his robe because she wanted to be cured?"

Christ felt some of his power pass out from him at that touch. It's the same way with helping people. You're giving something. It tires you.

"We fellows who are doing this sort of thing feel we have hold of something, but we don't dare use our names in connection with it. Look up the new book, *Alcoholics, Anonymous* which we helped write. We studied around for a long while to find how we could tell our story without using our names. That book was the answer. It tells some actual stories—my own among them—but no names are given. Even the publisher doesn't know our names."

"But Dr. X," I insisted, "Why not let these drunks pay you something for what you do for them? After all, they have been a burden to their friends. You put them back where they can earn a living again and live a decent life. You deserve any kind of fee you want to charge."

"No, we can't commercialize the idea," the doctor said firmly but kindly. "That would spoil everything. We've got to keep our work as a gift to anyone we are able to help."

"Moreover, I'm not sure we could set up a sanitarium and cure people effectively in any wholesale manner. I'm convinced this idea has to grow, one cure at a time."

I tried to argue still further. "But Christ was willing to let folks invite him in for supper and the night," I suggested. "You and your wife have food to buy, and rent to pay, and overhead expenses in the way of taxes and insurance and shoes for your daughter. It's your own fault if you don't let these reformed drunks help pay their own way."

"I'm satisfied," he said with a quiet smile that permitted no debate. "My wife and I are happier than we have ever been in our lives. We can keep going very nicely as long as I get a few operations from time to time, as I am doing. I'm doing a good job of living, and am happy," he ended.

Then he handed me this final thought. "I have found that no one can be permanently happy unless he lives in harmony with the rules set down in the Good Book," he said. "Try it some time! You don't need to wait till you're down and out before you ask for help. There's help waiting for you right now, if you just ask God to help you."

† † †

*The gifts of friendship have only the value that
friendship gives them.—The Advance.*

YOUR FAITH