



CORNERSTONE  
RECOVERY  
**FINDING LOVE IN RECOVERY**  
*Not the 13th Step, but the 13th Chapter...*  
Bill Wigmore

Some years ago, I met a man who got sober before the Big Book was published. The Big Book came out in 1939; but during the 4 years prior to that, alcoholics met as members of what the Oxford Group affectionately called: their "alcoholic squad." They huddled together sharing their stories and recovering from their addictions by practicing the spiritual principles of the Group and by reading the Group's spiritual literature. They recovered through the same basic method people still recover through today -by changing.

One piece of literature these folks found really helpful in bringing about the much-needed change was the 13th Chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians. Not yet having the Big Book, they used this short chapter to understand just what. Their spiritual change would look like, if and when it happened.

This chapter is sometimes known as the Love Chapter. The alcoholics who read it back then were all desperate cases. They desperately needed to find that something in their lives that would change them and make them feel better than booze had done or they knew they'd soon be going back to it. They discovered that that much needed something was Love.

I'm not usually one for heavy scripture quoting in this column, but since this writing had such an influence on AA' s forbearers, I hope you'll stay with me and keep reading. Paul writes: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing: Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on having its own way....

When I was a child, I spoke like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child: when I grew up, I gave up childish ways. For now we see as in a glass

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darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three: but the greatest of these is love.

That fellow I met explained to me how those drinks used this Love chapter to help them change. He said they'd meet as a group and study it -study it one .phrase at a time -and as they studied and learned what love was really about then they tried to practice it, taking it home and putting it to work in their lives one phase at a time. "Love is patient and kind, Paul says. And these guys said they weren't infact, they were far from that. So all week long they practiced being patient and they practiced being kind. Patient when they were waiting for a job or waiting in a line. Patient when things didn't go their way. Kind when they wanted to say something un-kind; the way their razor-sharp tongues had always cut people down before.

These guys were not saints -but now they were willing to grow along these new spiritual lines. And each week they'd come back to their Oxford Group and report how they'd done at practicing these new principles in all of their affairs. Sometimes they'd succeeded and sometimes they fell flat on their face -but they kept coming back and they kept trying to grow and they kept trying to change. Then they'd read the next lesson that Paul tried to teach them and off they'd go back into life putting it to the test. "Love is not jealous or boastful" -and as they worked at it they discovered they were both." Love is not arrogant or rude" -and what they found was they'd been arrogant and rude for years. "Love does not insist on having its own way." Don't you know they had to spend more than a few weeks practicing that?

And so these lessons in love kept rolling out week after week: "Love bears all things. Believes all things; hopes all things; endures all things. Love never ends. " The guy said that by the end of a few months -both he and the people in his group had started to change. As they practiced love-Love slowly started working its way into their hearts and into their minds -Love started changing them -changing even the way they thought -and pretty soon, they started liking the way Love felt -and just like addicts, wouldn't you know: they wanted more of it. (Gotta love us!)

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Paul writes, "When I was a child I spoke like a child, thought like a child, reasoned like a child; but when finally grew up I gave up my childish ways... Growing up is what recovery is really all about. It isn't just about quitting. Most of us have quit a hundred times before. Recovery's about growing up & growing tough some of the things and some of the fears we all avoided through our long and painful detours into addiction.

Some of us are 30 or 40 or 50 we finally quit using and start growing along spiritual lines. But inside, as we begin that journey, most of us find that we're still 5, or 7, or maybe we hit 12 on a good day. At those times, many of us turn outward desperately searching for some woman or some man to come fix what feels so wrong and so empty inside us. The 13th Step has been around for a long time' and it's brought relapse and tragedy to countless addicts.

Maybe it's helpful to remember that our spiritual forbearers were equally desperate but they turned inward in search of God -the God of Love they hoped would come and change them -and they used this 13 chapter to learn about his Love and to remove the obstacles to love what they had inside them. The Big Book says that in the end it is only inside us that the Great Reality resides -the place "where faith, hope and love abide - but the greatest of these is love."