

# The Story of Self Support

## The Cast

- 1) Sponsee
- 2) Sponsor
- 3) Dr. Bob
- 4) Bill W.
- 5) Narrator

**Opening Scene: A sponsor and sponsee sit over a coffee.**

### **Sponsee:**

"I can't afford to put any money in the hat. I'm almost bankrupt! I'm going to meetings every day, and just can't give the money!"

### **Sponsor:**

You may not be able to give a lot now, but at least give some, you just paid for this coffee you're drinking...is it more important than our fellowship? Being responsible is part of our spiritual growth. Give what you can, and as things get better, give a little more. We have a 7<sup>th</sup> tradition that states every A.A. group ought to be fully self supporting. This tradition came from the shared experience of our founders.

Let me tell you about this:

### **Narrator:**

The year is 1940, Alcoholics Anonymous is 5 years old.

Money had been a problem for Bill W and Dr. Bob from the start. Both had spent their early years of sobriety in strained financial circumstances. When AA was three years old, Bill was offered 'an office, a decent drawing account and a very healthy slice of profits" of Towns hospital, in exchange for 'moving his work' into that institution. Initially he was for it, but after discussion with other members he turned the opportunity down.

Shortly after deciding to keep his AA work non-professional, Bill lost his home. For the next two years he and Lois lived with friends and moved more than 50 times before they could afford their own home.

Renouncing personal gain, Bill, however, clung to the idea that AA itself should be liberally funded. He believed that AA should build a chain of hospitals and mount a public education campaign. With these aims in mind, he and his associates approached John D. Rockefeller, Jr., for financial assistance.

Rockefeller dispatched an investigator to Akron. The report he received made him a life-long supporter of the group--and a firm believer that money would spoil it. In 1940, he gave a dinner for AA and invited the leading members of New York's financial community. At this dinner, he asked his son Nelson to announce that he (John D.) was donating only \$1,000 and to explain that AA required little more in the way of financial assistance. The other guests followed suit--one banker sent a check for \$10!

**The Scene: Our founders, Bill and Bob, are talking the day after John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s announcement that "money will ruin this thing".**

**Dr. Bob:**

Bill, I know you're disappointed John D. Rockefeller Jr. decided not to fund us.

**Bill W.**

Bob, it is not just the disappointment over the money it is my fear that many will die before we can reach them. I worry that we will never be able to do all the work needed.

**Dr. Bob:**

We have to put our faith in God, Bill, everything happens for a reason. We must figure out the reason behind this. What is God trying to tell us here?

**Bill W.**

Bob, Lois and I have moved over 50 times in the last 2 years. I'm afraid we are wearing out our welcome, we won't live forever, Bob. We need money to keep going, we need money to ensure our legacy continues.

**Dr. Bob:**

We always get by, Bill, we need to think "What would the good book say?"

**Bill W.**

Yes, yes, I know, you are much more patient than I am. I keep thinking if we could just get some outside funding we could help so many people."

**Dr. Bob:**

Remember, Bill, with outside funding comes outside influence. We run the risk of being taken over at some point or asked to do things that we may not believe are right for our fellowship.

**Bill W.**

You are right, Bob, in fact, you are more than right, and we need to get across to our members this very message. They need to dig deep in their pockets and fund our fellowship. I would like to see a time when every A.A. group is self supporting through their own contributions and whatever excess funds they have are sent in to pay for the cost of keeping our fellowship going and growing.

I'll never forget my sponsor Ebby. When Ebby heard how serious my drinking was, he resolved to visit me. He was in New York; I was in Brooklyn. His resolve wasn't enough; he had to take action and he had to spend money. He called me on the phone and then took the subway; total cost, ten cents. At the level of telephone booth and subway turnstiles, spirituality and money began to mix. One without the other would have amounted to nothing at all. Right then and there, Ebby established the principle that A.A. in action calls for the sacrifice of much time and a little money.

**Dr. Bob:**

I think we need to write a letter to the groups telling them just this - how important it is to be responsible financially and how this will protect our fellowship.

***Pen in hand, Bill begins to write a draft of the 7th Tradition.....  
Dr. Bob sits in the background quietly.***

**Bill W.**

I think I have it, Bob! Let me read it to you and tell me what you think:

“The A.A. groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.”

**The sponsee nods his head, the two members hug/shake hands and leave**

**Narrator:**

The year is 2024. A.A. is now 89 years old. There are over 123,000 groups and more than 2 million members worldwide. So, you see how putting in a little bit of time and money over time has allowed our fellowship to grow and save many lives. We need to continue this tradition for the generations of alcoholics still to come.