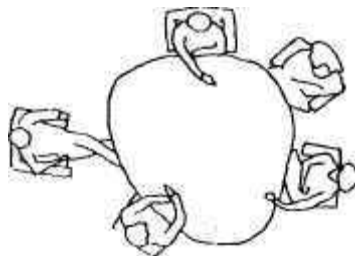


March 1979

*Around the Tables***Principles**

**A**ROUND THE TABLES, I heard a very fine talk by a guy with whom I disagreed on a lot of things, including his understanding of Step Twelve. But he is sober and so am I, and isn't that what AA is really all about?

The more I thought about it, the more emphatic the idea became that *principles*, not dogma and doctrines, underlie the entire fifth chapter of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Once again, the collective conscience of the Fellowship drove me back to the basics—which, for me, are the fifth chapter. How the evening's speaker regards the Twelfth Step is solely and uniquely his own concept, just as mine is my own. The method applied to the Fourth Step also varies with each person. The style of the Third Step and its

collateral Step, the Eleventh, again demonstrate the individuality of AAs.

Yet, individual though the approach must be, the success of the quest depends on principles. At this date in my experience, the "rarely" of the fifth chapter has an inescapable connotation of "never." "The steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery," have proved their absolute merit over the almost forty years since the original publication of the Big Book. And "The principles we have set down are guides to progress" is, to me, one of the best statements ever made on "How It Works." I recognize that if I continue to practice these principles, there is growth waiting for me that I can't even begin to comprehend.