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## Starting Your Journey

### God As Early AAs Did Understand Him

By Dick B.

Where and how should you start reading the Bible if you are one who wants to use the Good Book for recovery, for deliverance, for an understanding of God, and for further spiritual growth in A.A. or a 12-Step Fellowship today? Well, why not start at the beginning! Just remember, however, this article is a *guide*. It will not quote the “begats.” It will not quote the Bible in toto or even large parts of it. It will not tell you how to interpret the Bible or where to go to be taught about it. It will *suggest some approaches*. Most of these approaches have now been documented as those used by the A.A. pioneers. They may help you in graduating from A.A.’s “kindergarten,” as Bill Wilson called it, and moving on to a greater understanding of God (the Creator our pioneers relied upon), the Bible (the “Good Book” they read for spiritual facts), and the spiritual principles (which they borrowed from the Bible and biblical sources and used as their guide to loving and serving God and doing His will).

#### Begin with Our Creator and the First Verse of the Bible

The first verse in the Bible (*King James Version*, which early AAs used) states:

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth (Genesis 1:1).

Learning about, and understanding God, can and should begin at the beginning—with God as our Creator. That is perhaps a good reason why A.A.’s Big Book text refers to God as “Creator” twelve times (See *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed., pp. 13, 25, 28, 56, 68, 72, 75, 76, 80, 83, 158, 161). And the Bible certainly declares, confirms, and reiterates that God is our Creator, saying:

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. . . . (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? *there is* no searching of his understanding (Isaiah 40:28).

Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein (Isaiah 42:5).

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to *him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator (1 Peter 4:19).

## Study All You Possibly Can about Our Creator

### Learn that Our Creator Has a Name—*Yahweh*

When you want to seek, find, meet, and get to know someone, you usually start by asking his or her name. So let's start with our Creator's name. God not only *has* a name, He specifically declared what His name is. As rendered in the King James Version, Exodus 6:2-3 state:

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I *am* the Lord: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name* of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them.

For a discussion of the divine name *YHWH* and its translations as “*YHWH*,” “*Yahweh*,” “*Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh*,” “*LORD*,” and “*Jehovah*,” see: *The Shocken Bible: Volume I, The Five Books of Moses*, (New York: Shocken Books, 1995), pp. XXIX, 285, 287; John R. Kohlenberger, III, *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), pp. XXXV and 158; David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible* (Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc., 1998), pp. xxxiii-iv, 65; Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999), p. 32; and *The Jerusalem Bible, Readers Edition*, 1966, pp. 3, 7.

### Learn What Our Creator Says about Himself

In His Word, God has revealed a great deal to us about Himself. The Good Book says:

*God is Almighty :*

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect (Genesis 17:1).

And God said unto him [Jacob], I *am* God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. . . . (Genesis 35:11).

Note Bill Wilson's comment that only God Almighty could cure the alcoholic's form of lunacy (Dick B., *The Akron Genesis of Alcoholics Anonymous*, pp. 12-13).

*God is our Maker* (Note: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed., pp. 57, 63, so describes Him):

Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, *even* my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded (Isaiah 45:11-12).

*God is in heaven* (Note the last line of Dr. Bob's story, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 3rd ed., p. 181;

and *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p. 234):

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven . . . (Matthew 6:9).

But whosoever shall deny me before men [said Jesus], him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 10:33).

So then after the Lord [Jesus] had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter *any* thing before God: for God *is* in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is* none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God (Psalm 93:1-2).

The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God (Psalm 14:2).

*God is not a man :*

God *is* not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do *it*? Or hath he spoken, and shall not make it good? (Numbers 23:19).

And also the Strength of Israel [will not lie nor repent: for he *is* not a man, that he should repent (1 Samuel 15:29).

For *he* [God] *is* not a man, as I *am*, *that* I should answer him, *and* we should come together in judgment (Job 3:32).

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy: for I *am* God, and not man. . . . (Hosea 11:9).

*God is invisible :*

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared *him* (John 1:18).

Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father (John 6:46).

Who [God's dear Son] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:16).

*God is spirit :*

God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

*God is love :*

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love (1 John 4:8)

And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16)

*God loved first, then commanded us to love Him and others :*

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16)

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:7-11)

*God is light :*

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you. that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5)

*For those who believe, God is :*

the eternal God (Deuteronomy 33:27)  
 the living and true God (1 Thessalonians 1:9)  
 an holy God (Joshua 24:19)  
 the God of our fathers (1 Chronicles 12:17; Ezra 7:27; Exodus 3:13, 15, 16)  
 the God of peace (Romans 16:20)  
 the God of all grace (1 Peter 5:10)  
 the God of patience and consolation (Romans 15:5)  
 the God of hope (Romans 15:13)  
 the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3)  
 love (1 John 4:8, 16)  
 the Father of mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3)  
 the Father of lights (James 1:17)  
 God the Father (Ephesians 6:23)  
 God our Father (Ephesians 1:2)

the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3)  
 our heavenly Father (Matthew 6:9, 32)  
 our Father (Matthew 6:9)  
 our Saviour (1 Timothy 1:1;2:3)  
 the living God (Acts 14:15; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 1:22; Isaiah 37:17)  
 the living Father (John 6:5 7)  
 the true God (I John 5:20)

*There is only one God :*

For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:5)

Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith (Romans 3:30)

One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:6)

Thus saith the LORD, the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; and beside me *there is* no God (Isaiah 44:6)

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

*God is a jealous God :*

. . . for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God . . . (Deuteronomy 5:9).

*God commands us to have no other gods before Him :*

I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me (Deuteronomy 5:6-7)

I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Exodus 20:2-3)

### **Why all these Good Book quotes?**

Granted, early A.A. pioneers, and their founders, studied the Bible and took their basic ideas from the Bible. But why all these quotes from the *King James Version* of the Bible? Because the author is trying to make available to AAs and Twelve Step Fellowships today a specific and accurate knowledge of exactly what early AAs meant when they used biblical expressions in the Big Book, in their pamphlets, and in their stories. When they repeatedly used the word "God," the word "Creator," the word "Maker," and all the other descriptions of God such as Almighty

God, the God of our Fathers, Father, Spirit, and so on, they were talking only about the one God—Yahweh—the Creator—who was the one true God, the living God, as to whom they were to have “none other.”

Why go into such detail? Because the universalization, the revisionists, the “inclusive” urgings that began almost as early as 1940, all slowly contributed to the following ideas. “God” can be a “higher power.” The “higher power” can be the “group.” The “higher power” is merely a “power greater than yourself”—any old power will do, just as long as it is a power greater than you are. Therefore, they say, the “power greater than yourself” can be: Gertrude, Ralph, a lightbulb, some “goddess,” Santa Claus, a chair, the Big Dipper, a doorknob, a bulldozer, a table, or “good orderly direction.” Such absurd names for God, as Sam Shoemaker characterized them, soon gave rise to historical treatises about what A.A. *is*. Such scholarly works began declaring that A.A. is really about “not-god;” that the word “God” is just an expedient or convenient name for anything you want “it” to be. Finally, this same kind of distorted thinking led to official proclamations that AAs were free to, and could invent, could make up, their own higher power—which could be “him, her, or it.” The same or similar writings asserted that AAs could make “it” into “something” or “nothing at all.”

This kind of thinking calls for the following statement: You would have a very difficult assignment if you asked a table for, prayed to a lightbulb about, looked for guidance from, or sought relief for your alcoholism through: Santa Claus, Gertrude, the Big Dipper, or “it.”

To understand the original program—the one with a documented 75% to 93% success rate—you have to understand what the pioneers were talking about. And they were talking about “seeking,” “finding,” “understanding,” and making “conscious contact with” the Creator—not Santa Claus, nor Gertrude, nor a chair. They simply weren’t that stupid, and we shouldn’t even doubt their intelligence on this score! If you or they looked at a quarter or a dollar bill and notice the inscription, “In God we trust,” would you say that meant “In a table we trust.” Or “In a group we trust.” Or “in something we trust.” Think about it! Is anyone that far off the beam?