

3RD TRADITION

The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Longform : Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation.

Some Definitions : **Tradition** : A time honored practice. A coherent body of precedents influencing the present.

Stop: To cease and desist. **Halt**. Discontinue.

Requirement/Require: To need, insist upon, demand, compel. **Desire**: To hope or wish for ardently.

Ardent: Passionate

Perhaps this requirement is not as casual as may appear. For some stopping drinking means consequences have lessened enough to attempt a more moderate approach. That's not stopping that's pausing. In the early days of AA, before the traditions, mistakes with who could or should be accepted cost some people their lives and it can still happen, if a group strays from this or any other tradition. In one lightning stroke of wisdom, after many storms, a thousand forms of prejudice are eliminated. It wasn't until 1941 that it was officially acceptable for women to be members. The fear (and it's always fear that causes hesitation in reaching

out) was that they may be a cause of distraction, jealousy, and suspicion. Belief in the Bible as key recovery tool was emphasized in the pioneer stage of AA. They even had a term for it: oxidizing, meaning borrowing heavily from Oxford Group methods, which was very Christian based. I was once a member of a group that required shirt and tie for home group members and dresses for the ladies. What of those who have other addictions? Those who are court mandated? Shelter/Halfway House mandated? The chronic relapser? Those who refuse to work the steps? Then there are those who claim AA would be better off without all this "God business" ! What this tradition does is bring it home to one question: Does the person have a desire to stop? How much help the person wants, needs, or asks for is between them and God. Who, but God could possibly know which one of us is going to make it or not. To quote from AA Tradition: How it Developed by Bill W : " If alcohol is an uncontrollable problem to him(or her) and they wish to do something about that, that's enough for AA. In fact, that one can join on the mere suspicion of being an alcoholic. We don't wish to deny anyone his chance to recover from alcoholism. We wish to be just as inclusive as possible, never exclusive. " Because of this tradition, millions have become members, who may have thought themselves unworthy. For that, let's be grateful, despite those that may make us uncomfortable. It's not about comfortability, it's about **SOBRIETY!**

RESOURCES: 12 Steps and 12 Traditions
The 12 Traditions Illustrated
Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers
AA Tradition : How it Developed by Bill W.(1946)