

# First Things First

An old folk proverb says: "It ain't what you don't know that hurts you; it's what you know that ain't so." Before we walked into Twelve Step programs, how many opinions did we have that we now know just "ain't so"? We thought the primary cause of our slavery was others, our circum-stances, a chemical substance, misunderstandings, mistreatment, a habit - life gone wrong, a screwed up world. Sometimes we thought we were hopelessly lost, even cursed and damned. Many such thoughts flowed through us. But they "ain't so!" The good news of recovery and of the Christian life is that what we once thought is wrong! WE are sick, and need to be healed. WE are weak, sinful, and crazy at times. It is US who need to be strengthened, cleansed, and enlighten-ed by God's healing power and then we can think about setting our circumstances, our relation-ships, and our world in order. First things first. We cannot even see what is really strong, good, or sane until we find healing and forgiveness.

***I know nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*** (Romans 7)

The best part of what "ain't so" from our pre-vious understandings, is that we are not lost, cursed, or damned, without hope. We have hope and that hope is where it has always been: in relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

***Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord was! He filled me completely with faith and the love of Christ Jesus. This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--and I was the worst of them all. But that is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.*** (1 Timothy 1)

On a rainy Saturday afternoon, a father came up with an idea to entertain his bored eight-year-old daughter. He tore a large map of the world into small pieces, mixed them up, and told her to put them back together like a jigsaw puzzle. To her father's surprise, the girl completed the puzzle in a

few minutes. "How did you do it?" he asked. "It was easy," she said. "At first I couldn't fit all the lines and dots, and colors together on the map. Then I saw part of a man's face on the back of one of the pieces. So I turned all of the pieces over. When I got the man on the back together, the world on the front took care of itself." This child had her priorities right. When individuals are put together, "the world takes care of itself." When the person of Jesus Christ and life in relationship with Him begins to come together for us, our world gets taken care of.

God wants to deal with a sinful, broken, and screwed up world. He does it one person at a time. God wants us to do the same. He wants us to see the reality of our sickness and our need to be in relationship with Him. He wants us to have pure hearts that prioritize His presence and His agenda for life. He wants us to "walk the talk" before we "talk the walk." No one recovers alone. No one recovers without other people. We belong to a recovering fellowship. We belong to a Christian community. We walk in a hurting world. God wants to use our lives in recovery to bring healing and hope to others but it will only be effective if we live "first things first." Are we living in healing, forgiveness, and surrender to God's will? Are we spending quality time getting to know God and opening our hearts to Him? Have we made our lives accountable to other mature Christians? Are we looking for ways each day to walk in relationship with others so we can offer hope and healing to them?

***Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.*** (Lamentations 3) ***For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*** (Philippians 2)

## Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. What ideas have I needed to change from what I used to think before recovery?
2. How am I learning to restructure my mind and my activities so I live God's priorities?
3. What does it mean to put Jesus first in my life?
4. What needs to change in my life so I can live "first things first"?