

Tradition 7

I was looking for spirituality for years before I got to AA. Little did I know that the highest form of spirituality was so accessible and simple. That as soon as I say to myself that I am an alcoholic and a member of AA, I can then drop some money in the 7th tradition basket as it goes around an AA meeting and my money will no longer be mine – it will belong to AA and now the material has become spiritual right before my eyes.

In the beginning of AA men wore hats. When the meetings were over they would take a hat off their head and pass it around, maybe a gesture of humility. Thus, the saying was born “money and spirituality mix only in the hat”. Once money was collected in the hat – it is used solely for the 12th Step message of AA to be carried to the new man who hasn’t found us yet, still suffering. Money is spiritual once it goes in the 7th Tradition basket.

The 7th tradition is different for a meeting and a group. For a meeting the 7th tradition is collected for rent, coffee, literature and meeting incidentals.

For a group the 7th trad is collected to carry the message of AA on a world wide basis. The money is first used for group expenses and expands out to pay for GSR funding – travel, copies and PRAASA cost. These monies are put aside 1st then a group divides what is left over in a PIE chart to District, Area, Central Office, H&I and GSO.

The 7th tradition for a meeting is responsible for the meeting. The 7th tradition for a group is responsible for AA as a whole.

Group’s money is not my own personal money; it is AA’s money for 12th Step work. So when I’m in a group business meeting I am considering how the AA money can be used to carry the AA message. Electing members of the group to do service jobs and participate in service committees is what all Groups do. The GSR carries the group message to the Area Assembly.

There are group jobs that take a trusted servant out of the group meeting. Every year The GSR must go to 5 area Assemblies, 12 Standing Committee meetings, 12 District Meetings, PRAASA, copies for reports. Where should the money come from to fund this vital work?

Groups can have a service budget

How should this money be spent? Who decides? It is the 12 step work – how can that be defined or narrowed down? The group – by passing the basket – has now a responsibility to make sure that money is spent only on 12th step work. Is the GSR doing 12th Step work when they travel to the Area Assembly, District meetings and PRAASA? If some AAs can afford to pay their own way in service job should they? All are equally eligible no matter what finances you have. BUT will the group elect only the members who can pay their own way so they don’t have to “foot the bill”? What is this attitude? Are we treating our trusted servants like we treat ourselves – either with greed or penny pinching? How do we treat ourselves with our own money? Are we spend thrifts or tightwads with ourselves? Do we bring these attitudes into the group conscience when we are asked to use group money for our GSR? Are we sending hundreds of dollars to the

Pie chart and telling our GSR to use their own gas money? Is the GSR who is asking to be reimbursed by his group for 12th Step work he does on the Group's behalf feel like he are asking for charity or a handout? Why do AA members believe that they are "helping" AA or "giving back" "to AA when they fund their own way?

A Group is responsible to give guidance and support activities – financial and spiritual. The group gives time for the report and they then listen to the report. The Group has asked the GSR to attend all their service responsibilities and the GSR needs money to follow thru. If the group asks its member to serve they have to be willing to pay for this service. Is the communication of the Group's Conscience to travel to the Conference 12th Step work? Are the AA members who carry this message from their group, to the DCM, to the Delegate to the conference 12th Step work? If the answer is yes, then why is it so foreign a concept in AA groups to finance the movement of their message?

When a GSR is paid by the 7th Tradition funds to go to a service function the thinking goes like this: If you pay my way I bring your message. If I pay my way I bring my message.

The group will listen a little harder if they have funded the GSR to go to the committee meeting. They want to know what you did with the group money.

When I pay my way to the Area Assembly, I might listen and I might not. When the group pays my way to the Area Assembly – I will listen for a group that not only expects a report but is interested in it. After all, their dime has been spent.

Also, when the group funds the GSR, they might take a little extra care in voting in members of the group. They might ask a few questions of the potential candidate to feel comfortable that this AA member will be able to carry their message to AA as a whole and bring the message of AA as a whole back to the Group.

It's natural enough not to expect every AA group member to be interested in AA world services. They have enough on their hands with the group business and 12 step work. But when there is a voice in the group that should be heard by AA world wide there is a method to communicate that – Thru the GSR and that takes money – Group money.

Concept II – Is our group meeting its wider 7th Tradition responsibilities?

How does the Conference become the active voice of AA as a whole? Thru the conscience that gets taken at the Group level. To get that conscience to the conference takes money, money that is AA's money – money that has been set aside beginning at the Group level to get that voice 1st to the GSR ->then the District ->then the Area ->then the Conference. This communication of the true AA Voice can only be heard when the 7th Tradition money is used for its ultimate purpose – to carry the true voice of the AA member to the Conference. This is not money from the trusted Servant's pocket, it is AA money; the money that was dropped in the basket when the 7th tradition went around the room. Does your group know about this transformation of the material into the spiritual?

Is your group following Tradition 7? Or has it strayed away? The GSR has an opportunity to get their group on track with Tradition 7 – to its truest simplest meaning.