

Spirituality in Group Money Discussions

Cast of characters:

Narrator (consider splitting up into Narrator #1 and Narrator #2) **Mary**
Zoe, Sponsor **Ginny**
Tammy, sponsee **Lori**
Dan, group member **Ken**
Chris, group member **Suzanne**
Justin (or Justine), group member **Marilyn**
Carl (or Carla), group member **Pat**
Lynn, group member **Carol**
Sophia, the Group Representative **Lorraine**
Markus, the Group Treasurer **Gaston**

Narrator: As they were walking to the car after the Monday morning meeting on the topic “Minding my own business;” Zoe commented to Tammy, her sponsee.

Zoe: That was a great meeting! I really needed to hear what everyone had to share on “motives” this morning.

Tammy: Yes, I agree. It was a good topic. I feel so much better than I did an hour and a half ago that I signed up to chair a meeting next month. I’m thinking about choosing a topic that I’ve never heard discussed at a meeting before.

Zoe: Are you thinking about chairing a meeting on the topic of sexual intimacy?

Tammy: Oh, my gosh, no! I mean, that isn’t what I was thinking, although, I’ve never been to a meeting on sexual intimacy. I’ve been struggling with my fear of financial insecurity and I’ve never been to a meeting on that topic. It would take me out of my comfort zone, but something has come up in my personal life; and I really need to hear other members’ experience, strength and hope on the subject.

Zoe: “Fear of financial insecurity” sounds like a good meeting topic. I remember when I first started attending Al-Anon and members of the group went out for ice cream after the meeting. I felt uncomfortable going because I didn’t want to sit there drinking water while everyone else enjoyed sundaes. Even when I did have money for ice cream, I was afraid to spend it for fear that I’d go home to discover that the car needed a new battery, or my son would need a new pair of shoes.

Tammy: When I was a child, my father held two jobs to support our family. Then, as an adult, I was fearful of not having enough money. I was generous with my time but not with my money. I was afraid of being in debt and never spent money on anything fun. I feel better just talking with you now.

Narrator: The following month, Tammy opened the meeting in the usual manner, and members of the group read the Steps, the Tradition and Concept of the month. After introductions, Tammy asked if there were any announcements. Dan announced a fun event that was a fundraiser for the local Intergroup Office.

Dan: We're having a cake walk as a fundraiser before the quarterly speaker meeting next month. Please donate a homemade cake, if you can, and come out and join us. Each round of the cake walk is a dollar. It's kind of like musical chairs, but there are enough spots for all of the players. I think we'll raise about \$100 if we have a good turnout. After the speaker, we're having a dance, so it will be a fun night for everyone.

Tammy: Thank you, Dan. Your announcement is a nice transition into this morning's meeting topic, which is "fear of financial insecurity." Let's start by reading the first four paragraphs under "Finances" on page 41 in the *Blueprint for Progress* (P-91) workbook. Chris, will you read a paragraph and then pass it along?

Chris: Sure.

FINANCES

Alcoholism is an expensive illness. For many people it took money meant for paying bills and buying family necessities. Over the years, many of us developed a habit of living on leftovers. Even when the family entered recovery, a poverty mentality followed us. We lived in fear of bankruptcy or starvation, long after any emergency had passed.

Justin(e):

Even those who have always had unlimited resources regretted wasting money by rescuing loved ones from the consequences of their actions. Some of us denied the truth about each individual situation and continued to spend saying, "this time will be different." Either way, we hoped some miracle would change our circumstances for the better. When the miracle didn't happen, we became resentful.

Carl(a):

Fear of financial ruin or the confusion that comes from wasting money may lead us to spend all of our time in a real or imagined survival mode. As a result, other important things can be forgotten. In Al-Anon we learn that with finances, as with all aspects of our lives, it is wise to take care of ourselves, to be responsible and to practice balance.

Lynn:

For most of us, handling our financial obligations in a responsible way feels very rewarding. By realizing where we came from, asking for help, making new choices and watching the results; we have worked our way into a better life.

Narrator: After the members read from the *Blueprint for Progress*, Tammy posed four questions for the members of the group to discuss during the meeting.

- What were (or are) my fears concerning finances before Al-Anon?
- How have these fears changed since coming into Al-Anon?
- How have spiritual principles played a part in those changes?
- How can I continue to follow through with (or use) those changes in other areas of my life?

Justin(e): I'll share on the first question. Before Al-Anon, I used to sit at the kitchen table with all the bills spread out in front of me and I'd try to figure out which ones I could pay without overdrawing the checking account. It was like playing roulette. The time I spent worrying about paying the bills was time I wasn't spending with my kids. It was depressing.

Dan: For me, since coming to Al-Anon, my fears are diminishing and I'm able to look at my financial situation with a clearer mind. It isn't clouded by overwhelming feelings of doom and gloom anymore. My wife, son, daughter and I have monthly family meetings where we talk about our goals as a family. Sometimes things like, "Hey, let's buy a dirt bike," come into the conversation. With the serenity I have in my life now, I can see our financial situation realistically and realize that it's okay to spend money on fun things sometimes. I remember the days when I wouldn't spend money on a wagon or a tricycle for my children because I was afraid of getting fired from my job. Before Al-Anon, it was so difficult to concentrate at work and I was worried all the time. I'm not fearful anymore and it feels good to be able to talk about money without feeling a knot in the pit of my stomach. I'm so grateful for Al-Anon.

Narrator: Before the meeting ended, Markus, the Group Treasurer, reminded everyone of the group's business meeting the following week. When the meeting ended, the members gathered up the Al-Anon literature and put the room back the way it was before the meeting. Several members were talking about the various spiritual principles that were identified during the meeting, such as acceptance, faith, and patience. The following Monday, Sophia, the Group Representative, opened the business meeting and turned it over to Markus.

Markus: I would like to build on the previous week's meeting topic during my Treasurer's report.

Narrator: Following Markus' recap of income and expenses, he said it was time to make the group's quarterly contributions.

Markus: Let's share on the following questions before we make a decision regarding how much to contribute.

1. What does fully self-supporting mean?

2. Has my group established an Ample Reserve or are we stockpiling money for no specific reason?
3. Do I consider costs and what my group needs when I decide how much to contribute or do I just keep tossing the same amount in the basket every week?
4. How do we support our AIS? District? Area? WSO?

Narrator: As the members shared on the questions based on spiritual principles, their feelings of discomfort and uneasiness lessened. The group members came together and agreed that their reserve fund was too large and the vote was unanimous to contribute that excess to the District, AIS, Area and the WSO.

Lynn: To me, “fully self-supporting” means that our group pays rent for our meeting room, we cover the expenses for our Group Representative to attend the Assemblies, we have Conference Approved Literature to give to newcomers and to sell to members, and we support our District, AIS, Area and the WSO. An ample reserve is good to have, but I think we have too much money in our group’s treasury.

Chris: I agree that we have too much in our reserve fund. I suggest we contribute the excess money to support AI-Anon’s service arms. In doing that, we are acknowledging that AI-Anon is bigger than just our group and we are helping the families and friends of alcoholics who haven’t found us yet.

Zoe: I support Chris’s suggestion. Our group is holding onto too much money. If we keep enough in reserve to cover two months’ expenses plus money for our GR to go to the next Assembly, then we could give the rest to the District, AIS, Area, and WSO.

Dan: I like that idea.

Narrator: Members offered each other ideas on how the group could distribute their contribution considering the financial need and cost of the services provided to the group. The Treasurer asked the group to think about this and come back next week with more questions and discussion until they were all able to say...

All: I’m ready to vote.

Narrator: After the group voted....

Sophia: Thank you for participating in the business meeting this morning. It was good to see the unity in the decisions we made. Our Higher Power was definitely with us as we shared. Don’t forget about our fundraiser cake walk. I hope all of us can come together to have a little fun while supporting our local AIS office. Maybe our spiritual principle of abundance will remind us that most of us can spare a dollar to play a round on the cake walk. See you there!

Narrator: After the meeting, Zoe and Tammy were walking to the car.

Zoe: Wow, that was a great business meeting! After talking about personal finances last week and group finances this week, I'm starting to feel my fear of financial insecurity melting away.

Tammy: Speaking of melting, let's go get some ice cream!

Zoe: Great idea, Tammy! I feel so much better about spending a few bucks on myself thanks to the Al-Anon tools that I've been practicing and the spiritual principles that I've been applying to my financial affairs.