

Sought Through Prayer and Meditation

Wisdom from the Sunday 11th Step Meetings
at the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock



Geno W, with William G. Borchert



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Hazelden
Center City, Minnesota 55012
hazelden.org

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Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

W., Geno.

Sought through prayer and meditation : wisdom from the Sunday
11th step meetings at the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock /
Geno W. with William G. Borchert.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.).

ISBN 978-1-59285-658-9 (softcover)

1. Twelve step programs—Religious aspects—Meditations.

I. Borchert, William G. II. Title.

BL624.5.W214 2008

204'.42—dc22

2008035009

Editor's note

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12 11 10 09 08 1 2 3 4 5 6

Cover design by David Swanson

Interior design and typesetting by David Swanson

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Testimonials



I first met Geno W. in Little Rock through my friend and partner in recovery, Joe McQuany. I do not believe that the Wolfe Street Foundation would have become what it is, nor could it have helped the number of people that it has, without Geno's support and guidance. I thank God for Geno and the others at Wolfe Street over the years who have given so freely of their time and expertise and made the wisdom captured in this book possible.

—*Charlie P.*

I knew Geno well for a number of years before his passing. He visited me in Los Angeles on occasion, and I saw him in Little Rock. I was surprised, however, when he asked me to be his sponsor. I felt mixed emotions about this. I was honored that he had chosen me, but realized I had lost a friend, since my role would have to be a bit different. It turned out that we had a successful experience nevertheless, and his passing left a hole in my heart.

—*Clancy I.*

Through much prayer, study, and meditation, Geno shared his insights and wisdom with all those at the Hour of Power meeting at the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock. He also loved to come to Rose City for our Big Book Study, and we would

share our thoughts, experiences, programs, beliefs, and spiritual insights with one another. Geno had a thirst for God consciousness and lived his beliefs. As a member of Al-Anon, I was blessed to call him friend, and I miss him.

—*Mary Pearl*

Geno was unique—a kind of cross between Goldfinger and Father Christmas. He made me do all the stuff that I needed but didn't want to do—just the right guy for me at the right time. I will always be grateful to him.

—*Phillip M.*

Geno believed that secrets killed us. That's why when he was first diagnosed with cancer, he told all his friends that he was scared. He told us God was with him. He told us he would keep doing what he knew worked. He then told the entire Hour of Power gathering. He talked of it often while he could still lead a meeting. Once he said: "When I was diagnosed with cancer, I thought, well, that's okay. God will use me to show others how to get through something like this with dignity. I won't be afraid. I won't be sniffling. I won't be sorry for myself and I won't slip into despair." As a member of Al-Anon, he taught me so much about how to live and how to die with grace and dignity.

—*Cindy H.*

The feeling of community that Geno fostered supported a sense of welcome, comfort, encouragement, and nonjudgmental consolation that became a source of strength for all in good times and in bad. Through his patient encouragement I gradually developed a voice to express aspects of my journey in recovery, particularly as it related to prayer and meditation. I became very close to Geno and, in a relationship that continued until his death, was privileged to share a great many special times with him and learn much through the Hour of Power meetings.

—*Jim W.*

The Sunday morning Hour of Power was my favorite group. It always gave me inspiration to keep on trudging. Geno would bring all his experience into the meeting and use his experience to help people in ways to which an eighth-grade-educated person or a scholar could relate. He told me early on that I should pray on my knees even if I didn't want to because on my knees I wouldn't be giving God any orders.

—*Michael S.*

I had moved to another town in Mississippi, and one night while at work a loud knock came on the office door. I had been feeling alone and isolated for several weeks. I answered the door and there was Geno W. He said no one had heard from me in Little Rock for several months. He said he was passing through town on business and decided to look me up because he had been praying for me and was concerned. We

spent most of the night talking about God, and we never lost touch again. None of my drinking buddies had ever shown that kind of concern about me. He appeared in my life when I needed someone, and I believe God sent him.

—J. G. R.

Geno W. has had a dynamic impact on my life, as God used him to help me recover from this disease. I first met him at the Hour of Power meeting in January of 1984. We met downstairs at Wolfe Street and cooked breakfast before the meeting, as we do today upstairs.

After several unsuccessful attempts at recovery over the next few years, I was being taken drunk to a meeting on Thursday, March 31, 1988, and was asked to run into the YMCA to pick someone up and ran into Geno. I asked him to be my sponsor, and the next twelve years, until his death, he and I enjoyed a relationship few people encounter. He was hard on me in the beginning and required me to do a lot of things he knew I didn't want to do. It was by following his suggestions in spite of me that I realized I can get and stay sober. My sobriety date is April 1, 1988. Although he sponsored a lot of people, he always made time for me and was always there when I needed him most. He had a way of hitting you with what he called "a two-by-four of truth" to get me to see past the "my case is different" and other lies our disease will try to get us to believe. He continually reminded me to live in the moment and that our disease works by having us "think the lie, believe the lie, and when we take the ultimate act of rebellion, [letting the lie] kill us when we try and live the lie."

Geno started having me chair the Hour of Power meeting over the years and, through his “spies at the meeting,” would tell me when I did a good job and would tell me to keep up my spiritual connection. In fact, for every New Year’s resolution, he would tell me to list at the top “a burning desire to improve my conscious contact with God.” I had no idea at the time he was setting me up to carry on the tradition of chairing the meeting after his death. He knew it would be difficult for one person to be there every Sunday, so it was divided up weekly, with one person chairing the first Sunday of the month, another chairing the second Sunday of the month (which I chair), and so on. This tradition of chairing the Hour of Power meeting continues on to this day.

It is by trying to give back what has been so freely given to me that I realize how much Geno has positively influenced my recovery and my life. His unselfishness and desire to help others recover motivate me to emulate him and carry the message to others. He will always be remembered, and I am grateful I had a chance to thank him and tell him I loved him right before he died.

—*Bob O.*



Introduction

In our daily practice of prayer and meditation, how often have we been moved by a particular thought or postulate, something that touched us deeply? In that special moment, our soul was swayed, our spiritual aura and insight uplifted, only to have that marvelous experience drift from our consciousness a short time later and be gone completely before day's end.

Perhaps if that same thought or concept were there in our next day's meditation and the day after that, we would more likely be able to savor its insight in even greater depth. This could then provide the opportunity for such an experience to become a true wellspring for our spiritual condition, a sturdy linchpin in our recovery from alcoholism.

This special book, based on the chronicles from the Hour of Power Eleventh Step meditation meetings originated and conducted by Geno W., cofounder of the well-known Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, is designed to provide just such an opportunity. It offers spiritual thoughts and postulates that can be meditated on for an entire week, thus giving the reader the occasion to probe deeply into the awesome power of the Eleventh Step of Alcoholics Anonymous and other Twelve Step programs.

It is, in a sense, patterned after the Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous itself, in which constant repetition of its concepts and principles builds a strong foundation for

sobriety. So too can the thoughtful repetition of specific spiritual concepts reinforce that foundation and enable one to build a strong spiritual life based on a “conscious contact with God as we understood Him”—the only certain solution to the disease of alcoholism.

The purpose of this book, then, is to enhance our practice of the Eleventh Step in our daily prayers and meditation. If we are vigilant in that pursuit, the program of AA promises we will soon see a glimpse of that ultimate reality, which is the kingdom of God.

Wolfe Street and the Hour of Power

Each year, more than a hundred thousand men and women cross the threshold of the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, hoping to find some semblance of peace and serenity in their troubled worlds. They have this hope of a daily reprieve thanks to three recovered alcoholics who dedicated much of their lives to helping others.

It was in the fall of 1982 when Geno W., Joe McQuanny, and Bert Jones, three local businessmen who have since passed on, saw the need for a place that could provide frequent support meetings for those seeking recovery from alcoholism through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. They found a former nurses’ residence at 1210 Wolfe Street and, with the assistance of volunteers, turned the two-story building into a comfortable facility where today AA groups hold more than forty meetings each week and where a variety of special activities and special events support and celebrate recovery.

As the Center grew as a focal point of sobriety, its founders and new board of directors created an outreach program to carry the message of recovery from addiction into jails and prisons, courts and corporations, and other community organizations eager to learn more about combating this growing problem.

Today, the Wolfe Street Center actively implements Twelve Step programs designed to educate and help all those seeking recovery from addiction, including families whose problems relate to alcoholism.

Convinced that the real answer lies in focusing on the spiritual solution fostered by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, in 1983 Geno W. proposed the institution of a special meeting at the Center specifically for that purpose—to help himself and others find greater spiritual awareness and growth through meditating on AA's Eleventh Step: "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

That meeting, which he called "The Hour of Power," is still held every Sunday morning at the Center from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. It's one of the largest meetings of its kind in Little Rock and very much a major commitment for all the groups that meet at the Wolfe Street Center.

Many of those who were close to Geno W. personally recall with great warmth and appreciation his unstinting preparations for each Eleventh Step gathering. He would rise between 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning—the time he often

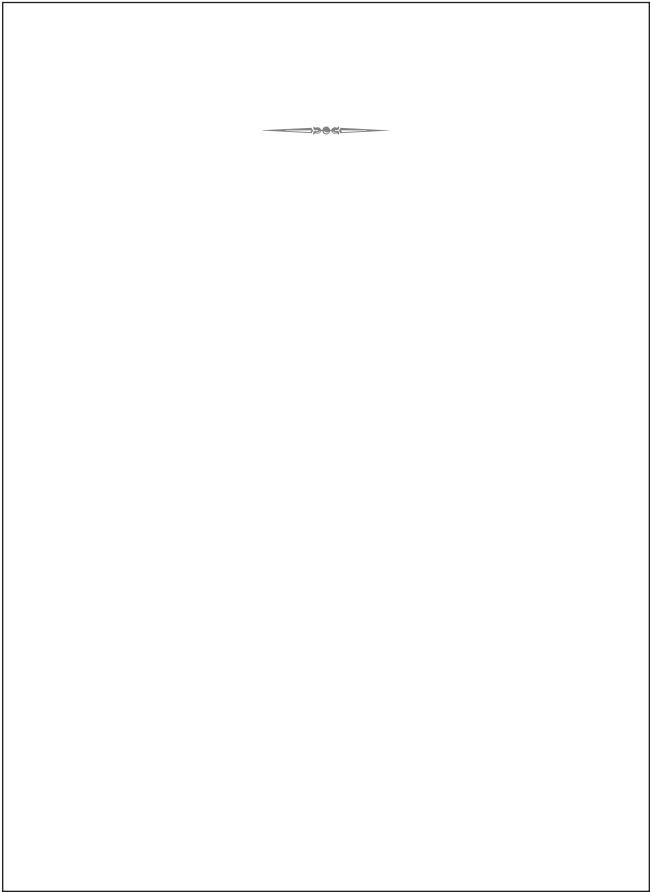
INTRODUCTION

described as “those hours of desperation” for most drunks, when God has a chance of touching their hearts—and start making notes for that morning’s meditation meeting.

His topics usually centered on ways of establishing and improving “our conscious contact with God” and on how pain can open the door, how humility can create the pathway, how prayer can light the way, and how true faith can establish a strong personal relationship with our Higher Power. It was the accumulation of these notes chronicled on yellow pads that provide the basis and direction for this book.

After finishing his notations, Geno would arrive at the Center around six to team up with his breakfast crew. While he never said so himself, once again those who knew him said his cooking and serving breakfast to all those who came for the Hour of Power meeting gave him the humility he needed to share his most intimate spiritual thoughts and lead others toward a greater dedication to, and practice of, the Eleventh Step.

It is the hope of all those at the Wolfe Street Center that you, the reader, gain as much insight from Geno W.’s meditation topics and concepts as they continue to gain from each and every Hour of Power meeting.



Beginning the Journey



The very first word in the Eleventh Step of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous suggests that I be a seeker, a seeker on a journey to discover the awesome power of God that can reconstruct my life. I am urged to begin my journey by asking him to direct my thinking, so that it be free from self-pity and from dishonest and self-seeking motives. I am to ask not only for the strength to pursue this journey, but also for his inspiration—for the desire to follow and be an instrument of his will.

Looking back for a moment at my initial struggles to find sobriety, when I finally admitted I was powerless over alcohol and became willing to go to any length to stop drinking, I was offered a postulate I found difficult to accept at first. The premise was that I could regain power by admitting defeat and then turning my will and my life over to a God of my understanding. Having tried almost every other course of action to stay sober and failed, I grudgingly assented. And as I did, I heard the Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous telling me: “Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. . . . If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago.”¹

Still, turning my will and my life over to the care of a God who I felt was stern, rigid, and unloving, a God I believed had abandoned me because of my wretched way of life, a God from

whom I felt almost totally removed, was not an easy task. So I was directed to pray—to pray daily on my knees to seek a God of my understanding into whose care I could turn over my will and my life.

As my journey of recovery led me through the Twelve Steps, I came to learn more about my disease and myself. That it was not just about my drinking and drugging but also my character defects and shortcomings. My thoughts and actions changed. I began hearing more about God through the people at meetings. They spoke of his love and caring, his support and direction. Slowly my perception of my Higher Power began to evolve.

Soon I came to realize it was God who had given me this precious gift of sobriety, the power to refuse alcohol and drugs, the power to work the Twelve Steps in my life. Then came another more marvelous realization—that God was my very best friend. That he had always been there and would always be a loving friend provided I continued to seek a conscious contact with him on a daily basis.

I learned that the journey I am on has much to do with helping others, which in turn enables me to deal with life and life's problems. And as I become more aware of this, I find it easier to deal with any obstacle, since I am no longer trying to do it alone. I not only have God's power when I ask for it, but he continues to direct my life through the comments I hear at meetings, when carrying the message of recovery to others, when being of service, and when I'm practicing the Eleventh Step each morning.

Now that I have begun my Eleventh Step journey, I find that I am at peace with myself most of the time. I have already come to understand that life's conflicts and problems are all part of that journey. I know that I have been given the knowledge to understand that my Higher Power will not leave me to meet life's challenges alone. He will always give me the strength to face them, accept them, or overcome them according to his will.

Without any doubt, the greatest discovery I have already made on this spiritual pilgrimage is that the kingdom of God is deep within me. Recognizing that gives me the power to remain free from the desire to drink or drug and to build the kind of spiritual life upon which my sobriety and my life itself depend. And for that I will be forever grateful.

Prayer

Dear God, as I begin this journey each day to seek a closer conscious contact with you, my Higher Power, let me not rely on any changes that have already taken place in me, any reconstruction that you have done in my life until now. For by choosing my will over yours, all of that can be gone in a single breath. Therefore, please give me the grace to rely only on you, your will for me, your love and caring. May I continue seeking knowledge of your will and the power to carry that out, one day at a time.

Meditation

The power of God grows within me as I continue to seek God's will.

“A powerful addition to recovery literature, Sought Through Prayer and Meditation shows us how spirituality can be earned, found, and practiced. We all owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock for sharing this marvelous guide with us.”

Earnie Larsen, author of *Stage II Recovery: Life Beyond Addiction*

“I thank God for Geno and the others at Wolfe Street over the years who have given so freely of their time and expertise and made the wisdom captured in this book possible.”

Charlie P.

Each year, hundreds of recovering alcoholics and addicts cross the threshold of the Wolfe Street Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. Many attend the “Hour of Power,” a weekly Sunday morning meeting devoted to heightening one’s spiritual awareness and growth by focusing on the Eleventh Step of *Alcoholics Anonymous*: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.”

This special book offers fifty-two weeks of reflections, prayers, and meditations crafted by writer William G. Borchert from notes by Geno W. to uncover the many layers of meaning in the Eleventh Step.

Cofounder of the Wolfe Street Center, Geno W. (1927–2000) instituted the Wolfe Street Center Eleventh Step meetings and documented the best of what came out of those discussions for this book. William G. Borchert is currently working on a screenplay for a *Hallmark Hall of Fame* production of his book, *The Lois Wilson Story: When Love Is Not Enough*.

Cover design and illustration by David Swanson

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