



TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK

Part Three: The Meeting

October 11th, 2010

My first month of sobriety brought about an overwhelming need to talk. I had plenty of friends that I drank with, but none of them were in the same place I was. As a result, I felt cut off. I had created a barrier that my respect for them wouldn't allow me to cross by bringing up something they weren't living. The last thing I wanted was to come off preachy or sound like thought I was better than anybody else just because I had managed to stop drinking for a few weeks. Hell, everybody that drinks has taken time away from it, so what made my time away any more significant than theirs? I couldn't decide either, so I kept quiet and only wrote about it here; still not talking about it with the people around me.

I soon admitted that not talking wasn't healthy and I needed to seek out people who understood what I was going through. This is when I first considered going to a meeting. Realizing it was the only option that guaranteed everybody in the room would understand what I was going through, I made the call. I was told that since I had quit on my own and was going on my own (as opposed to a court order), it would be best if I went to a meeting where I could

just sit and observe. That would allow me to decide if it was right for me without committing. After I told them what side of town I lived on, they informed me about a meeting that started in forty-five minutes a couple miles from my house. I wrote down the address and thought about it for a few minutes. Then I decided to go through with it.

The meeting was in a small hall I had driven past dozens of times but never noticed. I can now safely say that I won't ever forget it. Trust me when I tell you there is nothing prestigious or cool about going to a substance abuse meeting. It is extremely humbling. There were about thirty people in the meeting, each called up one-by-one to talk about what they had been through since the last meeting. Many of them were there as a court-ordered condition of their release. Others had hit rock-bottom and were looking for hope. But whether they were there by choice or court-order - they were all sincere.

I haven't been that emotionally moved in a long time. Hearing the stories of people who have suffered real losses like jail time, broken homes, and unemployment because of alcoholism really effected me. There were about three different points in the meeting where tears were in my eyes just from listening. It made me really put my own situation into perspective. Yes, I had stopped on my own, but if I didn't stop I would be headed down the same path

that these people had already walked, and that possibility made me really uncomfortable. Many of these people had very little opportunity in their lives, and here I was not taking full advantage of all the opportunities I was given. I felt really embarrassed.

Prior to going to that meeting, my position was that I just needed to chill out on the alcohol for a while, but afterwards my position was that I never need to drink again. For the first time, I just didn't see anything harmless or fun about what my life had become; only the destructive path that lay ahead. I left that meeting determined to make sobriety a permanent fixture in my life and not just a momentary escape.

This week will be my fifth month sober, and I hope to keep it going. A lot of people have asked me how long I want to go. That's hard to say. There were people I met on the road who, even after I told them I wasn't drinking anymore, said, "Just one drink won't kill you, will it?" I would tell them that whether it kills me or not isn't the issue. The issue is that I've got something I need to prove to myself and drinking that would be a personal failure. Only then would they understand. While it is just a drink for some people, it's a lot more than that to me.

I just made it through my first nation-wide tour without alcohol. So I want to thank everybody that bought me orange juice, soda, or water instead of

booze. The gesture shows a lot of support for what I'm trying to do and lets me know I can kick it without drinking.

I also want to thank all the people I met on the road that read this blog and chopped it up with me about it, all the people who checked up on me to make sure I was still on my path, as well as the people who told me they were inspired by what I'm trying to do.

What exactly am I trying to do?

Long story short, I want to be the best artist and person I can possibly be, and I felt like alcohol was getting in the way of that. I won't say I'll never drink again, but the focus I have on being the best artist and person I can be is so strong right now that I'm having a hard time seeing how those two things can occupy the same space.

Also, thank you for reading this and for your comments, because having a place to talk about this is very important, even if it just looks like words on a screen, it means something.

Word is Blog.

