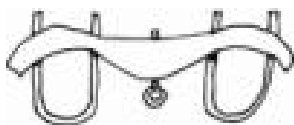


## Do you know Bill?

Pat Marrin | Jul. 16, 2009 NCR Today



"Take my yoke upon you ..." Matt 11:25

A man sitting on the bench at the bus stop kept looking at me as though he knew me. I didn't recognize him, and things only got more confused when he asked me, "Do you know Bill?" He was about my age, looked a bit worn at the edges, but he was engaging and eager to talk. As our conversation continued on the bus, I learned that "Do you know Bill" was an AA catch phrase one alcoholic might use to identify another.

I had to take this in as we talked -- that he had sized me up as a drinker, though I am not -- but I somehow felt flattered to be approached so openly. I am a journalist, a profession not immune from addictive habits. Most good copyeditors are obsessive compulsives, reporters love to chase the story, and eat and sleep erratically. Editors will run over you to get a good story.

Some of my best friends have been alcoholics, bright, articulate people with an angel assigned to beat them regularly. All their talents develop around their addictions; they can be brilliant at weaving their work life and personal relationships into a life with the bottle, but when it becomes their highest loyalty it consumes them and everyone around them. Bill Wilson, the founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, knew from experience that only a total support program and a deep commitment to sobriety could hold a drinker in place and keep him or her alive.

"Get in the harness with me," Jesus said, and I will show you the path to life He doesn't join our program, our personal labyrinth of wearying self-deception and dead-end false starts. We have to join his, go right when he goes right, left when he goes left. Being in his yoke may feel at first like the loss of freedom, but after we get used to being in step with Jesus, we realize that he is showing us how to be our true self, our best self, a mature human being living under the influence of grace.

It's like being in a jazz band. Do your own thing, but in sync with the group, and the result is always something larger and more interesting than even a good solo performance. Listen to the music, go with the flow, find yourself and your gifts in the context of others, the combo of life.

Not everyone will walk this path, thank God. But if you are weary and find life burdensome, it may be your time to admit it and get with the program. The invitation is there: "Learn from me for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for yourselves. My yoke is easy, and my burden light."