

Little Rock, Arkansas

1984 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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My name is Don, I'm an alcoholic. Can you hear that back there? Not that good. That's alright. We were a little bit late because I made a mistake of mentioning that I like bridges and Harlan took us on a tour of every bridge you got. I'm always somewhat awed at the responsibility of what you asked me to do tonight. So with your help and God's help we'll take a little journey tonight. I'm going to go through my life in the hopes that the one person I flew all the way down here to talk to can hear what's being said tonight. That's true. If I had to talk to all of you, it scared me to death. I am definitely an alcoholic and spent most of my life not knowing that, and so as a result, of course, I drank a lot. I also spent 13 or 14 years doing a variety of other chemicals, but I'm an alcoholic.

penitentiaries. And I only say that out front so that as you hear me talk about that you know that's where I came from. Please don't think that I'm a big time gangster. Big time gangsters don't go to penitentiary three times. Alcoholics anonymous has helped to put the pieces together for me so that I could understand and answer the question that I screamed out all my life. What's wrong with me? I spent most of my days wondering what's wrong with me because a casual observation in my life kept telling me that I never seemed to get around to doing the things that I wanted to do and I kept doing the things that I didn't want to do and it confused me a little bit. My favorite word in the big book is baffled. I identified with that right off. Baffled that's when you do everything right and it doesn't work anyway. You take what everybody says we'll make it work and you do that. It doesn't work. All I ever wanted to be was a boy scout. I was a Tenderfoot three times. Never got past that. Discovered in my review of my life that one of the problems was that I'm the kind of boy scout that helped little old ladies across the street never asking if they wanted to go. I grew up restless, irritable, and discontented and when I saw that in my big book I identified with that. That's me. Out of place, out of time, and out of my mind. I have a dear friend in California who opened a talk one time with the words that blazed at me. I'm grateful to you and to God almighty that I'm here tonight fully clothed and in my right mind. I'm finally in the right mind.

Alcohol made me feel better. It turned me from a kid who was three feet tall with a big wart on the end of his nose into an incredible human being. The very first time I used a bunch of us went out east to Denver with a bottle of whiskey. I became six feet tall. My voice dropped. Oh yeah. I began to plot and scheme. There was a guy back at Bill Boncid's drive-in that I was going to whip and there was a girl back there that I had no intentions of whipping. Up to that point he had intimidated me and she'd scared me to death. But I didn't know the nature of my disease so I did what I do. If two of these will make me feel this good I'd better have some more. One works you take ten and I damn near died. I threw up so much that night that the mere smell of whiskey for four years made me gag. But within a day or two I found out what didn't make me gag. I used to say I don't know about you, but I know about me and I became willing to pay any price I had to pay for a few minutes each day of being okay to be me and you being okay to be you. And if it was only a minute or two it was still some period of time.

It was alright to be on this damn planet and not feel like I was a misfit. I was in my first penitentiary when I was 19 years old. as a direct result of alcoholism and didn't know that. It wasn't until I got to you that you told me what was wrong with me and tied that long string of time up for me and answered why did I end up in that penitentiary. Because I had gone off and joined the Navy to become a hero. Heroes were loved and respected and

why did I need some of that. I quit school my senior year in high school to become a hero and save America from the red menace single-handedly. And within two years I was in a penitentiary. One of the symptoms of my disease is that when I start drinking I get lost I can't find my way home and there's a law against getting lost federal law if you're in the Navy. And I was they kept giving me these little silly 24-hour liberties really expected me to get back on time. And I expected me to get back on time I loved the Navy. One of the reasons I was baffled is because I loved what I did.

I'm really a sailor at heart. I can eat in a gale it didn't make me sick. I love the sea. One of my favorite things to this day is standing on the bridge of a ship at night and watching the phosphorescence of the waves as they break out at sea. The incredible scope of that has always caught my mind. I like the camaraderie and hanging around with those guys, the big guys. I was a radar man and radioman and my mind was challenged and we were at war and we were here. I liked everything about it but I couldn't get back to that damn ship on time. And you explained that to me. I have a disease it seems called alcoholism.

One of the major symptoms of my disease is real simple. I have an allergy to alcohol. If I had an allergy to tomatoes and I ate tomatoes I'd break out with an itch. The symptom of my allergy is that when I take a drink of alcohol into my system I break out with a screaming-mimi itch for another drink of alcohol. And it isn't that I didn't love my job or my family or myself even but that craving is stronger than anything I can bring to bear on it. It changes me and takes me out of my right mind and I become obsessed, physically obsessed and mentally obsessed with having another drink of alcohol. And for me any other kind of chemical you want to talk about, it changes your mind. I didn't know that.

I just go ashore and expect to be home in 24 hours and it was sometimes weeks before I got back. And the last time they'd moved my home all the way to Japan and they were mad as hell at me. And I was 19 and back in Denver full of hate and fear. And the fear had changed to terror because the reason I drank, which again I found in my book, was for the effect produced by the alcohol. You see it made it possible for me to feel things I couldn't feel any other way. And it made it possible for me to not have to feel other things that I couldn't cope with. And I came home at 19, a failure and I drank my rum because up till then rum had made me into a great lover. And all it did was make me sick. And I drank my vodka so I could be tough. And all it did was make me drunk and fall down. One of my favorite drinks from the very beginning was good red wine because with good red wine I'm a poet. And my very favorite of all was Coors beer. I could drink Coors beer and listen to Ferlin Husky sing four walls and cry. Just feel it down in here because I couldn't feel it without it. And I stopped working. So for the next number of years there was a combination of things. They took me to a doctor because I was living in a chicken coop. That was cool where I grew up. You converted chicken coop and your number one on the block. But I was sick and they knew it. They took me to a doctor and the doctor gave me methamphetamine hydrochloride as a therapy tool so I could talk freely. That's Methedrine. I could become uninhibited and talk freely. And I'm here to tell you it works. It does exactly that. I became totally uninhibited and I haven't been able to shut up since. And it made it possible for me to drink successfully again. Successful drinking for me was all successful. The illusion that somehow I was in control. Now I still fell down but with whiskey and speed it was a controlled fall. And I did that for years. I did a number of things for years that I won't belabor you with as I got sicker. My life was dedicated and devoted to some how or another finding it. The answer the magic answer would make me okay. And I found it over and over and over. It would last for a week

two weeks and then I had to go looking again. I found it in Peyote. I ate Peyote with the Indians one time in a marvelous ceremony and I had a genuine vision. To this day I don't doubt that. I saw a great huge bird flying with no head. And I knew that that was me. No direction. And for four months I stayed straight and sober and clean. I had to live in the north woods of California in a tree. Literally those red woods are big enough to sleep in. At the end of four months I made a mistake of going into San Francisco and it was all over. I have a body that can't take alcohol without needing more alcohol. That's simple. My early sponsors God blessing made me so aware that I came to believe it and I got comfortable. They said you know that's completely academic. If you never take a drink of alcohol that'll never happen. That will never happen as long as I don't drink alcohol. So why did I keep drinking? Because the second part of my disease is also very simple.

And thank God for sponsors who helped me to understand there's a piece missing here. I have a mind that at certain times is absolutely incapable of remembering anything out of the past that might stop me from taking another drink. It simply isn't there. 99 days out of 100 I can think a drink all the way through on the hundredth day I don't think. There's only one thing in Alcoholics Anonymous I'd change if I had the power. I take that silly sign off the wall it says think think think because there's times I can't and there's times that there is no human power on this earth that can think for me with enough intensity to keep me from taking the drink that I have to have my mind tells me to have to have. I understand powerlessness. If there's going to be one second in my life that I'm in that kind of danger then I want to do something different. Well I haven't had a drink for a while because you also told me that there is something we'll take care of me. See I'm a power seeker. I have always been a power seeker and I'm still a power seeker. I found power one time in a 49 Mercury convertible with leopard-skin seat covers. That's right. In my town that was it and I got one. It lasted two days the two blondes I put in the back broke the top and I didn't want it anymore. He had one. I found power in books. I could read a book and be whoever was in the book and it was great power in that as long as you and I didn't spend any great amount of time together. Well that was terrifying. It was power and money. I found power in sex. There was much power there. It scared me to death and I gave it up. Power and jobs. Through the process that you taught me about I discovered that most of my life I've been a sprinter. Not a long distance runner. That's part of the problem. If you put me in any new position I'm incredible. I have such a desperate need to succeed that I learned very quickly. I do all the right things. Everybody relaxes. One of the horrible things that I did to my family is that we kept putting me in new positions and I kept performing and everybody'd say, by God he's gonna make it this time and I believe that too and then everybody'd relax and I'd get distracted and drunk and be gone and come home sorry and we'll try again. I was a sprinter, not a long-distance runner. You can't feel good about yourself when you do that over and over and over and you know inside there's no choice in the matter. Alcoholics Anonymous has never taught me anything new. They have awakened the truth that I've always known. That's all. I have a very special feeling for the people of Arkansas. I really love you. Some of your people have done for me things that no one else has. So I don't want to talk about pain anymore. I want to share it with you the great joy that I have found in Alcoholics Anonymous from day one. I hope I've told you enough about my pain to know that it was no different from yours. But let me tell you about my last week before I died. There's so much pain there that it wasn't even painful anymore. I'm so grateful for my last week of life that I can barely contain myself because that's the week I got to see me for exactly who I was and there were no more excuses and no more dreams and no more kidding anybody. I saw me for who I was and I couldn't stand being that one more day. I have added dimension to the word creep. My two little boys and I were living in a \$40 a month basement

apartment on welfare because I couldn't work and I was on federal parole and the lady who rented us the apartment and lived upstairs raised or she had cats. She didn't raise them. She had cats. Have you ever been around anybody who had cats? Got them money. And her place was cleaner than mine. That's the week I saw that. It's Christmas week of 1967. I've never used heroin because of my keen alcoholic mind. When I was in junior high school they showed us a movie about junkies. Junkies are heroin addicts and what they pictured there was beyond anything I could conceive for me and I swore I'll never be that. So I never used heroin. I shot everything else I could get into a needle. As long as it wasn't heroin my mind says you're not a junkie. Christmas week of 1967 I woke up after one of those trips I used to take and that's my partner Bill and said my God Bill, we're in a junkie pad and he reminded me it was my house and I saw that. If you've been on a road and I'm sure some of you have you know that the myth of America is true there is money in the streets of America. All you gotta do is walk around with your head bent down all the time and you'll find it. You won't get rich but there's money there. And we headed for my folks place so the kids could see grandma and grandpa and found a dollar in the snow. Now if you're not through yet I'm going to share a couple little survival techniques with you in case you got some idea of drinking again. On Christmas Day any tree lot in the country about four o'clock in the afternoon will sell you any tree they got for dollar. That's where we got our tree and I'm an alcoholic it couldn't be one tabletop size it was big and it didn't fit the room so it went over this way. And I kind of saw that and it sort of struck me as a little bit pitiful for a 34 year old man with children to have to buy his Christmas tree with the dollar he found in the snow. We got to my folks place my dad met us at the door and he said I'm sorry your mother said I can't let you in today because she can't stand watching you die anymore. And for the first time I saw what I had done to my mother I was six years sober when I realized that wasn't the first time we'd been told that but that's the first time I saw that. Another piece of me died then he snuck us in anyway and I saw what I'd done to my dad because he jeopardized the happiness of his home that day to show us that he loved us and I'm the maniac that used to scream out nobody cares and I saw that I was a liar somebody did care and I saw what I'd done to my kids that's a shitty deal to pull on your kids when they can't go to grandma and grandpa's for Christmas and I got to look at that the end result of that day was marvelous because I finally saw that all of my dreams were dead and my people's dreams were dead and my kids dreams were dead and there was nothing about me that I could find redeeming if you will and that's the most joyous thing in the world for an alcoholic I think if you're not there talk with me I'll get you there quick God willing because at that point I quit quitting is a sick way of surrendering I quit said I can't do this anymore I would rather be dead than live like this one more second and I've got to tell you about the power of God as I understand him because I took a two months supply of his oxen a two month supply of speed if you will I shot it in my arm there's nothing there to get us all moving quick out of this room it should have killed me and I drank everything I could find in the house and I laid down to die knowing my children would be alright we've been over that ground before when I woke up in the padded cell they just put them in a foster home I knew they'd be alright and I got to tell you it was a disappointment in the morning when there was a knock on the door and the police came in because I was supposed to be dead after the initial shock I relaxed you're not through drinking yet you know what I'm talking about I was going to the county jail and that's an awful good place for an alcoholic to rest if you haven't been there yet let me tell you how to survive county jail real simple I lied to you for 10 minutes you lied to me for 10 minutes and we both go take a nap that's it I was good at that and they took me away now I had set myself up for that arrest earlier in the week I didn't have the honesty necessary to even go to the parole officer and say help but I set myself up with a little old charge it would have gotten me a six month rest at the summer camp and I didn't why they came they were

talking about nine charges one of which carried three years to life they were mad that Denver DA told me you're sick and you're through and if you beat me on this first charge I'm gonna bring the others one at a time and tie you up in the county jail till you're an old man but you're through and during that five months a healing began to take place inside of me and I can still remember pacing the tiers of the county jail you know what you do you lie to each other talk about what you're gonna do when you get out all the big timers who can't come up with a hundred dollar bond talking about what we're gonna do when we get out gonna get a case of Coors, an ounce of grass, an ounce of speed, and go to the mountains and get high that's what we're gonna do and I can still remember my mouth saying that in here it didn't feel right I didn't want to do that anymore and I did not know that I couldn't stop or how I could stop well they offered me a little deal and I'm telling you about this because it's the power of God as I understand him everybody thought I was a drug addict and the federal parole officer who'd been working with me and the state man got together with a judge and offered me this deal if I would plead guilty to a reduced charge they'd suspend the sentence turn me over to the feds and send me to Fort Worth to cure my drug addiction that's not a bad deal for a guy who's looking at life two things happened to me and I'm convinced that one of them is because God had already begun to operate in my life first of all I was wanting to go anywhere and do anything that anybody said so I didn't have to be who I was anymore but I'd had five months for my alcoholic ego to heal, too and the little boy inside of me said oh okay we're gonna go down there where there's doctors and books we'll be on the street in six months if you put me in where there's doctors and books I'll be out in six months wherever that is because I know how to play that game God bless them they tell you what's wrong with you how long it's gonna take to fix it and all the symptoms and signs along the way and you come out cured I played that game I knew that game I took their deal five days later I was in the Colorado State Penitentiary hollering out wait a minute this isn't the summer camp I signed up for because God and his mercy knew that I'd be dead today had I gone there because I'm an alcoholic and I was taken to the place where I heard the message that I needed to hear so I could be here tonight I had marvelous sponsors first thing I heard this guy get up they sent three guys over with numbers on their chest this guy says my name's doc and I'm an alcoholic and that means that I'm powerless over alcohol and drugs and all the other circumstances of my life and my life's become unmanageable and if any you smart bastards think you can still manage your lives look at the reward the state just gave you for the neat job you've been doing and then he gave me the message the message of alcoholics anonymous if you are an alcoholic you don't ever have to drink again ever you never have to experience that pain ever again I didn't know that everything in my life said yes I do and he said no you don't and he said it with such conviction I heard him I didn't know how but I knew he was telling me the truth and they invited us to go to the 12 step study school the tradition say the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking but that wasn't so where I came in they had a big meeting on Friday night where they let real people in from the outside you didn't get to go to that meeting until you'd completed the 12 step study school every Saturday afternoon and every Sunday afternoon we went to school and I went the very first thing they said was you new guys for the next five weeks you have nothing to say if you knew anything at all you wouldn't be here and they began to share with us in a way that I think is unique to alcoholics anonymous one of my early sponsors was doing natural life because when he was 17 he went downtown in Denver and in a shootout on the street killed some people I'd never done that so I couldn't identify with that but he talked about that day he woke up that morning with the feeling inside that nobody cared whether he lived or died and it upset him that does and he did what he always did to kill the pain he started drinking only this day it didn't kill the pain it got him involved in the pain and he got some anger he decided if if nobody cares I'm just gonna go take mine I have awakened many a morning

knowing that nobody on this planet cared whether I lived or died and when the medicine doesn't work I got into the rage and did my own thing so I could hear what he said but more importantly I could see what he was the man I was talking to was incapable of killing anybody I knew that one of the things this book tells me is that I'm not to fool myself about my values any more it tells me I already have the truth within me and I could recognize the truth of this man and I asked him about that he said that's right I have been changed and that's why I'm here tonight because Bruce had been changed and all I wanted was to be changed I didn't come here to get sober I came here to be changed he took me to the book and it talked about an entire psychic change I could be reborn I could start over what an incredible idea for somebody sick as I was because when you started talking me about sanity and insanity I had a little fear at that time I was certified by the state as a sociopath and a psychopath now I don't know a whole lot about either one of them but I know this they're both untreatable they don't even bother to treat them one doesn't have a conscience the other one doesn't just didn't give it him and I was both he said no no what's wrong with me is that I have alcoholic insanity he said you can demonstrate psychopath back me into that corner and I'll show you psychopath follow you come with me at once if I'm in the midst of my sickness and I need something I take it and if it's yours that's too damn bad if you get me angry enough I'll try to destroy your mind in the midst of my sickness and not even care but what I suffer from is alcoholic insanity he said so we're gonna take all the big stuff off of me I'm no big timer at anything alcoholic insanity is defined in the Big Book so simply that even my sick mind could grasp it it's in the story of the young car salesman who one day a little angry because he couldn't he was working for the place that he used to own and he went into a bar to have lunch and find a customer and in the midst of lunch it occurred to him that he'd been sober for a while he just had a meal and he could have an ounce of whiskey if he put it in his milk and he did end up in another sanitarium and then it defines it whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call that plain insanity lack of proportion and the inability to think straight I can grasp that if one works take ten two jobs two wives did that sober and I can't think straight my mind is missing a piece that will keep me from thinking straight to the end of anything particularly in relation to alcohol it will fool me it will deceive me it will tell me it's all right it will tell me I deserve it it will tell me I need it or most horribly of all it won't tell me anything so I can't think straight what a relief that is to know because we can treat that kind of insanity and he told me the most important word for me in the second step was the word restore and I began to learn about God's mercy you see the great fear for me was that I would have to spend the rest of my life on a psychiatrist couch trying to unravel what I had just failed to unravel in 34 years he said no no he suggested that if I were to set aside all of my old ideas the way he put it was that I was to forget anything I thought I knew about anything particularly about God because if anything had worked I wouldn't be where I was to set that aside and God in His mercy would restore me to the time when I wasn't insane you said you haven't always been a raving maniac; there was a time you were sane we don't know where it was and we're not gonna fool around trying to find it will assume it happened about three seconds after you were born so just forget everything we'll start over and that wasn't hard to do it was pretty well mush up here by God's grace I set aside everything I thought I knew about anything and to this day that keeps me out of trouble I've learned something if I'm willing to fight you over my opinion it's my opinion I never have to fight for the truth because the truth just is so if I'm up in arms to protect my opinion I'm full of garbage well he and a couple other guys had something I want I'm very practical person Bruce definitely had something I wanted they used to lock me away when I wasn't working and he'd come by and talk to me and it occurred to me one day that he gets in and out of his cell anytime he wants I've been in two other penitentiaries and I've learned really the best job there for me is tier clerk the tier clerk cell is tripped all the time because he has to run in for everybody else

because I don't like being locked up this time I didn't get to be tier clerk Bruce kept coming by and I wanted what he had so I decided to do what he did now please understand also that I did everything in this program for the wrong reason the first time my motives were not pure and clean if we have anybody here tonight and I'm sure we do that's worried about whether you're gonna work these steps right the first time let me set your mind at ease you won't you can't you can't work them wrong either we're seeking God and in the seeking we're protected if we genuinely seeking well they said I had to turn my well my life over to God to get what they had Well, I did. I went to my cell and I turned my will and my life over to God and I sat back and waited for my flash of light and it didn't come my nature is such that I can handle anything at all that goes boom anything that was the worst experience of my whole life I said that prayer and waited for the boom and absolutely nothing happened nothing and that freaked me out now my sponsors had taught me by then if you do something that your sponsor suggests that you do and you don't get the results you think you ought to get don't get mad at them and I did and as a response to me was a "Now, be grateful" that you didn't have a flash of light didn't it kill you all your life I've had some beauties and God bless him he did what AA people do better than anybody on this planet each of us has been allotted a certain amount of time and that's it we don't know what it's gonna come to an end we know it is he took some of his very precious lifetime and took me aside for a couple hours and shared with me his life what he had found and how he found it he talked about a kind of God that I really wanted to get to know he said God knows you probably can't stand one more big shock in you probably come to use you came to me slowly gently as I'm able to comprehend him and until I could feel him I was to trust him with my very life all the things I want to do in the next few weeks putting trust to a test because that's my nature to and I asked him in all earnestness how can I make it real Bruce got to be real and he said well God will reveal Himself to you as you reveal yourself to Him and he sent me off to do an inventory and two hours later when I finished it, I came back to him and the same loving human being who just taking so much time with me looked me in the eye and said that's garbage you wrote that to impress me get away from me and I was baffled again I ran off and found a guy that listened and I had a marvelous awakening this fella spent two hours justifying my behavior to me telling me it wasn't all that bad because all I'd done was write down some of the bizarre stuff like that and in the midst of that somehow it occurred to me that that wasn't what was supposed to be going on that once again I picked somebody out of my life who would tell me what I needed to justify my behavior I've been doing that all my life and if I didn't stop that I was dead I didn't know how to stop doing that so I took another review to find out if I want what you have more than I want life itself it's that serious to me I'd rather be dead than be without what I've been given this program and I sincerely turned my life and my will over to the care of God and did my level best to find the things in me that were blocking me from him because that's all inventory is it's an effort to discover and get rid of the things that are blocking me from God and get rid of the thing that was the key I don't have to keep this crap anymore I get rid of it and I had an experience with resentment that I love but in 1966 federal agents broke into my house it came unannounced knock down the front door on the back door and one of them came through the side window and before I know it was happening they had me on the floor mistreating me and my four-year-old son let out a shriek in this big cop turn and put a gun to his head and I went from resentment to hate in a flash of light and I nursed that hate from months and months and months and I plotted how I was going to get him and find out who he was or where he lived I won't tell you what I was going to do to him because some of you may not be through and nobody deserves I was not even gonna die well he went on that list it says all I had to do was make a list of people I was mad at and I sure as hell mad at him and it said I was to put down the reasons I was mad at him I had 22 reasons now that is an egotistical one small bust, 22 reasons you know I was to put down the

things that were being affected in my life because of that well everything and I tried earnestly to take the right attitude that the book suggests: that he, like myself was perhaps spiritually sick and I could agree with that I hated him anyway and I made a mistake and start doing what it said before I knew what it said it said setting aside the wrongs others have done we resolutely look for our own mistakes and it burst on me that I'd sent him an engraved invitation to my house I've been bringing dope out of Mexico and not paying the tax on it and I don't like this this symptoms the way they affect me but God bless him I can't hate him anymore I brought him to my house and I had another one of those bursts of truth my troubles really truly are and always have been of my own making I got mistreated by a lot of people but you know what I used to jump up in your face and say hey mistreat me when you quit hanging around with creeps they quit creeping on you in the midst of this marvelous process I learned fear lives here I felt it here so I thought that's where it lives lives here the kind of fear that comes on me when I finally got the job I've been wanting but at it for just two weeks now and the alarm clock didn't go off this morning I woke up 10 minutes late and I'm laying there in bed thinking oh God I'm gonna get caught in the traffic I'm gonna be 20 minutes late to work I'm gonna walk in he's gonna say where the hell have you been I'm not gonna like that I'm gonna say none of your damn business and he's gonna say it is too I pay your salary and I'm gonna say no you know what I quit so I don't even go to work I go drink instead I kind of fear that comes on me when I'm walking home in my own neighborhood on a nice summer night feeling at peace with the world and some Pekingese dog six blocks away go and my head turns that into a bull mastiff in the next bush who's been sent to eat me and so I go six blocks out of the way to get home and feel real bad about being a coward the kind of fear that just rolls on and on and on but all the things that are gonna happen any second now and I learned some more about mercy think about it there's a lot of sick people in this world we don't have a lock on sickness there's some just regular crazy people out there and folks filled with pain and fear and I have to spend most of their lives learning how to cope with that my sponsor made me look up words the word cope means to fight the good fight my coper broke I can't cope too tired to fight it says that if I will put down those fears those nameless fears if I'll put names on them and simply recognize I have them because I know the truth I don't have the resources to deal with them that's why I'm afraid if I'll accept to know that truth God will do a marvelous thing for me all I have to do is ask you to remove that fear from man to direct my attention to what he wants me to be and I immediately commenced out grow fear which means he must want me fearless and grown up I've tested that for 16 years and it's worked every single time for 16 years I'm not ready to believe that I get frightened that's a very scary world out there they're going up next to one another and I have to get out in the middle of every day but I'm not afraid of myself anymore my greatest fear of all was of this thing right here there's a maniac that lives in there I thought he was 16 feet tall weighed seven tons when I lived with him took another look at him the other day he's got that big and he wets his pants and we love him we love him God bless him but he don't run the show anymore he hadn't got a lick of sense anything goes including my life so he doesn't run the show anymore I took a Fifth Step I finally finished all that with the young fellow who'd been in the program the same length of time I had because you told me I was to find somebody that wouldn't be harmed by what I had to say and he was so loony nothing I could say would bother him and I had another God experience I spent most of my life until that moment alone and I'm talking with Jim that afternoon and he kept quiet he let me talk until I'd run dry and then he'd say a couple things and get me started again and somewhere that afternoon I stopped being alone because suddenly there were two people in the room you see up until that moment whenever that happened there was me and whoever I needed you to be I'd never granted anyone the dignity of their own separate existence for me you were always who I needed you to be or thought you were I was afraid you might be and in this process

there was me and there was Jim and he was a separate individual who loved me enough to sit still and listen to the stupid things I was telling him that he'd not be affected by it you can imagine Jim and I got very close Jim was in that penitentiary he was the first one that was convicted of vehicular homicide in Colorado in a blackout he killed somebody in a car and they sent him away for three to five years and when I thought about Jim's pain, mine became very small I knew what I'd done and he's in the penitentiary and has no idea in his mind why he's there; he isn't a criminal and I learned a little about compassion and I wondered forever what happens to Jim because they sent me home early before he got out and I'd always wondered and when I got out one of the first jobs they gave me was driving a little truck and I loved it but for one part the other guys got to go home at four o'clock and I'd come in they'd make me take the packages to the bus station and then stand in line out there and you never knew when you were gonna get home and I kind of didn't like that one afternoon while I'm waiting in line the door opened and a prison guard came in with Jim they were putting him on the bus to send him back to Florida and the odds of us ever meeting are infinitesimal for five minutes our paths crossed and Jim knows I'm okay and I know he's okay and will never meet again that's the kind of mercy I get from God he keeps my mind clear for me of those kinds of things when it came time for me to ask God to remove these things and I just went back to my cell for an hour and went over them I had another one of those damn double experiences I wasn't a sprinter anymore for the first time in my life I'd finished something to the very best of my ability I was done couldn't have done it any better at the same time I knew it was a shabby little old thing the state my mind was in it was a shabby little thing but it was done and I had a lifetime of work ahead of me and I knew it but I thank God from the bottom of my heart and I asked him in the midst of taking away the things that he wanted to take away to please don't let anything I haven't found yet kill me before I find it okay and I found some more the other day all the stuff I find today in my continuing inventory is shabby got the big stuff like stealing and hitting people and all that that's done how do you deal with yelling at a ten-year-old kid I yelled at my daughter just broke my heart broke my heart as it felt so good I wanted to keep it up I still have an alcoholic mind Christmas time is a trip for me because for reasons I don't understand they've given me back credit cards that's the kind of criminal I was by the way they never caught me for my real criminal activity I was too good at it I like to write things out mostly other people's checks and credit cards and every Christmas since I've been sober we go into shop and I don't touch those credit cards but I stand back and watch what goes on and every Christmas since I've been sober doing that my head has presented me with a scheme it would clean 500 to \$5,000 at every store I've been in I just have to say thank you God because we don't do that anymore but it's still there if y'all don't mind I'm gonna take an extra few minutes over my allotted time to share with you the most important thing in my life I understand why for me just going to church wouldn't work didn't seem all that different they talk about the same thing but I knew God had forgiven me but that wasn't enough my nature is that I got to pay for my ticket and he understands that and he gave us a way to pay our ticket when I reached this point I went into my evangelistic stage yes see if I'm sponsoring you and about the Eighth Step you don't run off and try to save the world we go back and start all over we miss they wouldn't let you in so I can make amends to you and they wouldn't let me out to make amends to you so I had to learn how to do a couple things I had to learn first of all to live with what I had done until I could reach the people I'd done it to without guilt and shame and pain and that's easy because the secret to freedom is in the Eighth Step our marvelous program we talk about an action program and I agree but the secret to our program is in the stillness of doing nothing but praying and listening my sponsor gave me the key he said I want you to go up and make a list of all the people you've ever harmed you start with the list of people who hurt you from that inventory then you put down everybody else you ever met because if you met

them somehow you screwed them we're not gonna fool around with who did who didn't and then he said I want you to close your eyes after each one and picture them standing dead in front of you and see if you can look him in the eye and feel the willingness to say to them I've caused you great harm I know what I did to you but I don't know what that did to you so would you please tell me what I have to do so that we can get the books to balance Bill Wilson tells us all at one point and another thing he wrote someone mentioned to him that they didn't have his light experience he says yes you have every one of you some of them just came more slowly well I had Bill's experience I was lifted that night from where I was I was lifted and set free because it finally came through to me there is no one on this planet that I won't look right in the eye and say to you if I have caused you harm you tell me what I have to do so we can get square very high risk because I know some lunatics but I got free now they kept me locked up for another eight months because they didn't know I was free but you know what happened they started letting me in and out of my cell anytime I wanted I find out how come Bruce got to do that they know that 70% of the people in penitentiaries are there because alcohol and they also know AA has a solution so the ones that were sober got to go around and Twelfth Step the ones who weren't yet that's all it was 12 step worth I got in and out of my cell and got to travel around you know every cell in that penitentiary looked the same no difference and I began to see the eyes of the people behind them no difference I had to write letters to some people God my sponsors were mean they said some of them you can write to and clean up some of them you have to wait till you get out and I looked the list open I figured who I could write to and I could wait and he'd check it for me and the ones I wanted to write to he said I think you better go talk to that one the ones I was quite unwilling to go talk to he'd say hell you can handle that but the tough ones and the ones that concerned me most were my mother my dad my kids how do you make amends to the mother who on Christmas Day was forced to say to you you can't come in with the kids you don't go home and say geez mom I'm sorry I didn't mean to do that the principle that he gave me told me what do you do after you say if I harm you will you tell me what I have to do you shut up that's what you do well I tell you and after I've been out of while she allowed me to come see her and not in those words but I said that to her and she said to me honey all I ever wanted for you was for you to be happy so on a regular basis I go buy my mother's house happy it was six years before she believed I was gonna stay sober she told me that but we have a marvelous thing it's been healed it's been healed there's no way I can ever make direct amends for all the ratty little things I pulled on my dad one of my favorites was when we finally got broke I'd go sweep the walk for two bucks or do this or that for a few dollars so what I do is go back and fix things up for nothing and clean the snow for nothing but mainly what I do with my dad is have fun he is a kick in the head he really is they've never been able to measure his IQ he lives in a 48 room house full of stuff and it's a reflection of his head I tried to deal with that when I was younger and I can't I quit trying to be him and became me and he and I have fun we really have fun he's gonna die soon when I know that and that's okay because he and I got back together and we have fulfilled the dreams we had for each other he's really my dad and I'm really his kid and now we have fun there is nothing I can do for the children that I damaged I cannot change one single thing that I did to those little boys they went to jail they went to foster homes they were damaged what I have been able to do because of you is to give them an environment where they can heal too and they taught me a very important lesson once we lived at Buena Vista I worked at the reformatory of all places helping guys who are coming out stay out and once a week I had to go into Denver and one day it occurred to me that maybe the boys didn't like that I've got a history of leaving and not getting back for weeks so I asked him if they minded that I went over and they said no dad we don't as long as you tell us when you're coming back that's all they wanted to know they don't need any more big surprises I've been living in the same house for seven years and

every now and then I get restless and you know what I found I talked to one of my straight neighbors because they know how to stay places and I'm now involved with a lady and two kids who don't want to go every time I feel like going he taught me how to build a bookcase and it worked I changed my environment I was in a different room and it worked whatever that madness in me went away so every time I get restless now I moved the furniture in my room I've got a wife who puts it there and that's where it stays until it grows roots and she can whip me so I don't mess with it but I got me a little room and I moved the stuff on the walls and moved the furniture and do this and that whenever I get restless I have a home you taught me about family you are my family families are those folks that know you that are actively concerned with your welfare that's who family is actively concerned who love you enough to tell you you're headed down the wrong path there's a gorilla down there that's gonna beat the hell out of you and then love you enough to let you go if that's what you have to do and they'll be waiting for you when you come back for the bandages family are those folks who nourish you and cherish you and listen to you when you're so happy the world will lock you up oh yeah and who will listen to you when you're just feeling so bad you can't hardly stand it and tell you to just be still you're gonna be all right we say yeah I understand I know about that you're my family I'm closer to everyone in this room than I am my own blood brother I really am you taught me to pray dear God thank you I came to you willing to die rather than live one more day and you've given me an urgent desire to live just as long as he wants me to I'm willing to become an old man in fact I'm looking forward to it. I'm practicing I bought a chair the other day that I can sit in for a whole hour at a time and do nothing and I figured by the time I'm an old man I ought to be able to do that eight nine hours a day I'm married a sane lady seven years ago sane I didn't even know any sane women I never picked one I went out looking for the sequence she's the same as disgusting and our marriage works because we never try to fix each other never you taught me that you didn't fix me you said we there is no human power that can help you none you introduced me to God Almighty he fixed me you taught me to pray not the prayer that says get me out of this my daily prayer is please fill me with your love and let it flow through me and into the lives of others I found that prayer is consistent with everything in my big book so I use it my life has purpose and meaning it's not a waste anymore do you know that in all of eternity as far as I can tell there's only been one model made like this one one and one made like you there's only one of you ever my self-esteem is no longer based on what I do my self-esteem is based on the fact that I am one of God's precious children and He loves me as though none of you had ever been born then he loves you the same way I'm no longer better than you nor worse than you we're just all square and suddenly the Lord's prayer takes on meaning for me we're all children of a common father who loves every one of us just as if the rest of them hadn't been born and He has very important work for us to do very important my God thank God for AA when I reach this point I'm helpless and hopeless once again I cannot stay home and say thanks boss I'm keeping this to me I can't do it it'll strangle me it'll turn me into a sour greedy old man I have to get out in the world and interfere in people's lives I need a cause I'm one of those maniacs that came out of Berkeley California in the 60s screaming where there's dope there's hope burned down City Hall well he's given me a cause and he's given you a cause I read about it in a book called Alcoholics Anonymous I was told that if I'd take all that garbage that was my life and willingly and openly let God use that in a sharing way with new people who knew only garbage that that would become my finest and only real resource I could take that out into the world where people are dying and going insane and because of my sharing of that they don't have to die and go insane by God that's a cause every one of us has that opportunity to let God use us for that I like that God that makes me feel important not in an ego sense I'm incapable of talking to a new drunk wet drunks scare me they only do three things consistently they hit you they throw up on you or

they wet their pants and I can't deal with any of those three but I willingly throw myself into the breach on a daily basis because of what we've been given if I'm willing to give that to them they can quit doing that I owe something to this fellowship that I can never repay Charlie talked about this morning God I got a chance to see the big book think about that here's these these two nuts that have been right around talking to all these other nuts on a planet with what three four hundred million people and they count noses one night and they said my God, there are 40 of us staying sober we better write a book about that out of four hundred million forty people are sober and it rates a book yeah and once they finally quit fighting over what went into the book and got it solid it's been in the hands of millions of alcoholics ever since and I don't know one yet who hasn't said that it'd read better if it said it this way and we haven't been able to change a word that's got to be a very precious book well I've learned something that book will not keep me sober without it I'm dead that book will not keep me sober and the reason I know that is I know some people read the book, then went out and drank I go to a lot of meetings because I believe we need fellowship I also believe I'm supposed to carry this message to alcoholics and they seem to show up at AA meetings and that's where I get what I need so I go to a lot of meetings but I don't believe that alcoholics anonymous meetings will keep me sober without him I'm dead but a meeting is gonna keep me sober and the reason I know that is that I know a lot of people who go to AA meetings and go out and drink I only know one way to sponsor you show up at my house and we walk through the big book word for word and do every single thing it says in here we work the steps without the steps I'm dead Steps won't keep me sober the reason I know that is I've watched people work the steps and go out and drink again but the combination of all those things with my trust and willingness that God's gonna meet me because of my walking that path all those things lead me to God and God keeps me sober so I do them all I wasn't doing anything else if there was a better way to stay sober I'd be there tonight not here I don't know a better way I'm gonna close with two little gifts for you my ten-year-old stepdaughter her father's a Denver policeman juvenile detective and for reasons that I don't understand he tells her about his work so when I'm not home she is not comfortable now I work for a living I got I had to find that I don't are these things and when I go out in the evening she'll come to me and she'll say where are you going and I can hear it in her voice and if I say to her honey I'm going to an AA meeting I watch her relax because she knows I'll be home and because I've told her it's so she also knows that while I'm with you she's safe because God protects my house when I'm with you and all that are in it we had a hell of a day one time when we came home found our house had been burglarized and she said oh my god what am I gonna tell the kids at school I told them God watches our house I said he does honey we weren't here when they were this year that's the most precious gift I've been given to know that my daughter is safe while I'm here that she knows she's safe when I'm here and that I'll be home I didn't used to get home now let me give you my favorite gift it's little old story it came to me because we can't wait to save this whole world and whatever I told you this at the beginning because this is how, for me, it seems. A fellow saw the statue of David by Michelangelo for the very first time I was just awestruck I don't know if you've seen it but it breathes and he went to Michelangelo and he said my god how did you do that Michelangelo was supposed to have said well I took this block of stone and I carefully chipped away everything that didn't look like David and that's what I got left okay that's how I see you with God as the sculptor and the book and the steps and the meetings and all of the things that we do with and for and by each other as the chisel and me is a very willing block of stone one day at a time we're chipping away everything that doesn't look like Don and so far this is what we got