

Sunday talks

1990 | Sunday afternoon | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	01:14:01	DP-1990-BOZEMAN_01

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Transcript

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But I feel like I've known him for some time. He's tried to work this program and he showed me a few things in the last couple of days that lead me to believe that he is trying to be of service to God and others in this program. I'd like to introduce to you Don P from Aurora, Colorado. My name is Don and I am an alcoholic. Hi, Don! And it's nice to be back among you folks up here again. Some of you I know and some I don't. Some I'm very close to. The rest of you hope I will.

Will be. We're in for an interesting afternoon because I don't know what I'm doing here. Well, I know what I'm doing here. I'm not sure yet how I'm going to do it. I understand to talk a little about the twelve steps and I may or may not do that. I ask before I get up here, I ask for two things. Of my father, please help please fill me with your love. And let it flow through me and into the lives of others and help me please to carry the message that you would like carried to this particular group and to me.

So one of the things I've done along the way, I take this book at its word and it says I'm not to pray for myself except as it may help others. And that's where that prayer came from. I know what I need more than anything on this in my life is to be aware of the presence of God and that love and I need to be filled with that. 99% is not good enough. 99.99% is not good enough. Because the only thing that saves my life is that and if I'm going to share that with you, I've got to be filled to overflowing.

And I thought that out one day. I thought let me try that. And I tried that and he answered that. So apparently that one's okay. And I must tell you when I stand here and look at you, I am filled with the presence of God. That's who's in this room and I can see it in your eyes. So whatever we do this afternoon, we'll have a little fun. We can't do wrong. What makes it interesting for me is that as those of you who have heard me talk before, when I share with you tonight, we're going to wander through my experience with the steps.

So I've been thinking just while I was sitting there, what would be different than that if I'm going to talk about the steps? Well, what I can share with you today is that I take the numbers off the steps today. I know we need to have that at the beginning. But maybe we can explore my mind a little bit and explore taking the numbers off of the steps because this is not a legalistic program. Although at the beginning it sure looks like that. And at the beginning I encourage new people to treat it like that.

We use the word surrender. I like to use the word submit. There are conditions here. I'm giving my life back freely with no strings attached. That happened December 26 of 1967. I had killed myself and literally in the next day I was given back my life with no strings attached. But I must submit to certain activities if I'm going to make that life of any use whatsoever to you. I could lay around in a nut house forever more with my life back and be of no use to anybody, but that didn't happen.

What brought me to that stage is what I would call pre-first step. Oh, you've been there too. Oh, it wasn't even pain. It wasn't any pain left. It was a recognition that I was absolutely useless. And I don't believe there is any bottom lower than that one. And I'd lived there for three and a half years, but this day I knew it. And what I

knew more was that there was no hope for that. There wasn't anything else ever going to happen that would change that.

And so I met the condition, the first condition of sobriety, the first condition of changing life, of entering onto a spiritual path. I quit. That's the short word for surrender. I can't do this anymore. I can't be this anymore. That was my recognition. I could no longer stand being me anymore. And death was not a frightening thing. It was the only answer. And death's a wonderful surrender. I mean, you really do quit.

It's all over. When I share with people and what I like about these little deals, they get to share with you as they share with the people on my couch. And maybe that's the direction we'll take, thank you. New people need to know what is surrender. I love AA meetings where you have a topic, because the topic we pick is always something we know absolutely nothing about. The topic today will be humility. Well, surrender is one of those.

How can I talk about surrender? I don't know how to do it, but I can talk about it for hours. But I think in images, and when I came here, I was literally reborn and given a child's mind to start over with. And so the things that I learned came to me as they would come to a child, and those are images, those are pictures. And the whole idea of surrender, I only know one thing about surrender. I was brought up in World War II, and we had some folks that surrendered to us unconditionally.

And I'm now driving one of their cars, they own us. They did the right thing. Surrender to it. It makes sense when I put it in perspective. But I have to think of this as a process. This whole business is a process. Life is not an event. I don't even think it's a series of events. That is how I experience it, but that's not the reality of it. Life is a continuing flow. And I experience it in segments, unfortunately. The closer I get to God, the more I understand the experience is a flow.

This is it. This moment is eternity. So what kind of a process is surrender? Well, if I were in an army, we'll use that one, and I was approaching the moment of surrender. It would be because I have finally met a power overwhelming. I am no longer able to fight, and I know I am no longer able to fight. I can put up no more defenses. They will overwhelm me, no matter what. And the only possibility for life is to quit fighting.

Well, alcoholism defeated me. I surrendered to that. Life defeated me, and I surrendered to that. And I realized I can't fight anymore. Now what an army does when it surrenders is it lays down all of its fighting tools, just lays them down, and walks away from them and abandons them. It's no longer a fighting army. They're giving up all their fighting tools, and they go sit by the side of the road, and they wait until somebody comes along and tells them where to go next.

And I relate to that in my experience. And all my fighting tools down. And as I began to study this book, they reaffirmed that. And I would suggest today anything I have to say, if you can't reconcile what's in this book, it's either baloney, or you just haven't experienced it yet. So don't pay any attention to it. It says we stop fighting anyone or anything. I stopped fighting me. Somebody finally came along and said, I want to go here. And I went there.

And my attitude was the same one an army would take on surrender. I will go anywhere anyone says and do anything anyone says, but I can't fight anymore. And that's how I have experienced this thing. I made one last

effort to control things, deciding which of the many institutions available to me I was willing to go to. You know, I preferred Fort Worth, Texas, the federal hospital down there. That sounded good to me because I knew I'd be out of there in six months.

That isn't what happened. My best efforts to get locked up in the right place got me locked up in the wrong place. But it turned out to be the right place. I had experienced absolute powerlessness and the fact of my life being totally unmanageable before I ever heard the words. And I think that's what our process leads us to. In my old way of life, I took the words, made them real, tried to understand them, and set up the mechanisms so I could operate them.

Here, my experience has been, I have an experience and one of you comes along and says something, and I say, yeah, that's right. That's what happened. And that's good because I can't operate it. I usually don't know what I know until about six weeks after I've experienced it. Okay, and by then it settled in so I'm no longer dangerous with that information. I'm off into something new anyway. As I explained, my physical allergy to alcohol, I could grasp that in terms of my life experience.

But a more importance to me, and now we're going to start taking the numbers off, and I have to make a statement. A friend of mine and I agree on this one. We did a really good thing in Alcoholics Anonymous. We numbered the steps and took them out of the book and put them up on the wall, so you could see what they were. We also did a very poor thing. We forgot to tell a lot of people that the instructions on how to do that have been here.

So I tell my new people, if you went off the wall A, put the instructions right here. And I even hate to call them instructions because what they are is we did this and this happened. And if you would like this to happen, we'll show you how we did this. If you don't want what happens to resolve this, don't do it. Because this is one of those deals where if you do this, it will happen. So if you don't want a spiritual awakening, don't do this.

You'll have one. And there's nothing harder to watch than someone who has just had a spiritual awakening but didn't want one. I sponsored some of those guys. We can laugh, but it's hard. And you know that in our third step in this book, they even warned us about that. Be sure before you take this step that you are able to abandon yourself utterly. Because friend, you're cooked. Yeah. What they helped me to understand in terms of powerlessness, my real problem is up here.

The unmanageable life that I lived was in my mind. The life I have out here is a reflection of what's going on in here anyway. Today I know that. And as I look back over my life, it's eminently clear. A life run on self will brings the kind of things that a life on self will do. I will step on your toes and you will retaliate. And so I got trouble. When I manage my life, it's a mess because I can't manage my thinking.

I learned just enough about the rules of the game to get in trouble. Gunner and I were playing Nintendo baseball today and he keeps beating me. Because I know just enough about which buttons to push to push the wrong one at the wrong time. And it kind of fits in with how I used to live my life. I can learn just enough so that I sound good and look good and feel good for a little while. But I don't know what the end result is going to be because I haven't learned what that means.

I never lived by principles. My thinking was unmanageable. At the meeting this morning, the topic was serenity. I had a great deal of difficulty with that whole idea. I didn't know what it was for one thing. What I did know is that it wasn't floating like a zephyr in the air. That's one of the definitions in the dictionary. I have used a number of different chemicals that help me to float like a zephyr. So that isn't what it was going to be.

My sponsors knew that I'm a word mechanic and that I make entire lifestyles out of sentences and words. So they made me get a three volume Webster's dictionary to find out what these words mean. And it's a wonderful tool that I use. I found a definition of serenity that I could work with. Clarity of thought. If my problem is unclear, muddled thinking, then sanity will be clarity of thought. And if I have clearer thinking, I feel like folding like a zephyr.

I'm fine in any situation. The clearest thought I can have is that in any situation there's damn little I can do about this. That's clear thinking. Once I know I can't fix it, I can figure out how to get out of here. How to step aside when the train's coming instead of trying to stop the train. If I'm thinking clearly, I can also begin to participate in what this deal is really all about. I can see what my contribution is supposed to be and then step aside quietly so you can make yours also.

If I am here, I have a contribution to make. If you are here, you have a contribution to make. Currently, my contribution is to share with you and your contribution is to listen while I do that. Later, it'll be my turn to listen while you share. But I can tell you standing here looking at you. You're already sharing with me. It's already a two-way street. I honestly had no idea where we were going when we started, but you started laughing now I feel better.

So I have to find some way to get my thinking manageable and I can't do it. And you can't do it. I've read all the books you wrote. I studied it. When I was 13 years old, I realized that I'm really not human. I come from somewhere else. And I realized that because I didn't feel or think like you said you felt or thought. So I must not be one of you. But my people haven't written any books. Until now. But there is a power that can guide my thinking.

And I learned that because some people said that flat out who were now able to live a life that was manageable in totally unmanageable circumstances. People who were at peace and productive in a penitentiary. Who didn't get in fights in the yard. Who didn't get their cells broken into. Who didn't get beat up on. Who didn't get mixed up and all the stuff that was on a penitentiary who kind of slid through it. And I wanted that.

As long as I'm stuck in this body, I really wanted to give it a chance. I didn't want to die down there under those circumstances. Well anyway, they helped explain to me why it's unmanageable. It's unmanageable because it has only one thing in mind. I want what I want when I want it. And I want it now. And since I don't have it, you probably do. I'll take it from you. And there is never ever enough of whatever it is I need or want now.

No matter how much I have, it's not enough. There is not enough love in this room to satisfy me. All but one of you can come up to me and hug me and tell me how wonderful you think I am and you love me. If one of you doesn't, I'm shot. Okay. There isn't enough money to satisfy that part of me. If that's what makes life important, there isn't enough. If I've got 10 and you've got 20, I got to go get 30. If that's what my life is based on, there isn't enough.

I can't manage. And I found out in this book that alcoholic insanity, the kind I have, is defined as lack of proportion and the ability to think straight. That's how it's defined. I was certified as a sociopath and a psychopath. And they're untreatable. Which is fine. You told me that this isn't treatable anyway, what I am. Okay? You just have to let it die and start over. That's what you do. Lack of proportion and lack of the ability to think straight.

I'm warned against the brainstorm. Okay. And I love them. Oh, yeah. You really feel alive when the whiteness is going off in there, don't you? Great ideas. Here I am unable to support my family, but I've got General Motors reorganized just as soon as they give me a chance. So there's not enough. And I can't think straight enough to figure that out even. So I have to come to a state of death. Of absolute abandonment. Of self in order to get what I need.

I have to surrender. I have to quit. To when you have to lose. And not just most of it. All of it. I reached a state because of kindness and guidance and watching other people. Or I could legitimately tell you that my state of mind has been and is and God willing will be. That whatever he has in mind for me is better than anything I ever have in mind for me. It's just that simple. My life is none of my business. Now I came to believe that this was possible by watching people.

People can't do it for me, but they're the only example of God. And I watched people whose lives had been changed. And I came to believe first of all there was a power because they said there was. Here was a killer who was not capable of killing anymore. And a stick up man who couldn't do that anymore. And a thief that couldn't steal. It isn't because they had been saved or anything like that. They couldn't do that anymore.

They didn't think like that anymore. And that's what I wanted. And they gave me the clue. We suggest you forget everything you think you know about anything. Particularly spiritual matters. If any of it had worked I wouldn't have been there. Now I have to convert everything in terms I understand. And what that means to me is that all of my life until I came to Alcoholics Anonymous all I ever heard were lies. It doesn't mean everybody lied to me.

But all I ever heard were lies. Because your truth was not true for me. It was a lie because I took it in, warped it, and then used it when it was convenient. I think the process of surrender is the process of recognizing the lies for lies. And letting them go. It's just that simple. My whole life had become a lie. I'm one of those who, again I like to take the numbers off because when we get legalistic, if you get legalistic and read this this way, it means you can't have a spiritual whitening until you're to the 12th step.

That astonishes me. But I hear it all the time. In my reading of this book the sharing of the common experience the spiritual awakening in here and in my life took place before I got to the third step. I awakened to the fact that there is a power greater than myself that I can trust. And I am willing to surrender to that. And this magnificent book is written so that as you and I come along this spiritual path and change, they tell us what the change is going to feel like and look like so we don't think we're nuts.

You know, when I get into a situation that six weeks ago I reacted to this way and now I don't react that way, is there something wrong with me? No, they tell us. Here's what we did and when we did this, this happened. And this is what it looks like. And this is what it feels like. And since I get to play, let me describe a couple of

those that are vitally important. Creeping up on the third step prayer, we've come to some conclusions that a life will run on self will can hardly be a success.

We're beginning to sense the presence of this power. If nothing more than recognize it in the people around me, I'm sensing the presence of a power that I can believe in. And changes are happening to me. And here's what they felt like. And here's what they will feel like. And if you wonder if you're on a spiritual path and this is happening and you're new, if it feels like this, you are. When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed.

We had a new employer. Being all powerful, he provided what we needed if we kept close to him and performed his work well. It began to get a sense of that, that there was a sense of direction in my life. I was working in a prison dish room. And I was learning how to work. I was being directed. I could sense this. My sponsors said the way you go to work every morning as you get out of bed first. And when this door springs open, you go to where you were assigned to be.

Don't go over here. Go over here. I was getting direction from people. Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves. And I began to experience that. That's a spiritual event. When I'm being self-centered, I don't give a damn about you. The spiritual life for me has been one of living in reasonable harmony with you and thinking of you. At least as often as I think of me. And here I am, creeping up on this, and I am interested.

And some other people for a change. I was beginning to have a sense of something with my friend Jim, but I didn't understand. It wasn't a pain, but it was a strong feeling. Now I was in that penitentiary for something I remember doing. No question. My friend Jim didn't know why he was there. He was the first one in Colorado that had been convicted for vehicular homicide. In a blackout in his automobile, he had done what each of us has been terrified we might do some night.

He'd killed somebody. He had no recall. None. They told him why he was there. He didn't know why. It was not part of his experience. And I was feeling something. I wanted it to be better for Jim. I understand today that's called compassion. I know what it was. I just knew that I felt for Jim, a genuine feeling for him around this point that it could get better for him. Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves.

Our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. I believe the greatest of all human pain is to know you're useless and can't contribute anything. Good health means for me, what can I contribute? In any given situation, I can stand quietly today and ask that question. What can I contribute here? Sometimes it's be quiet. Sometimes it's move this from here to there.

Sometimes it's go pat that one. Tell that one how beautiful she is. Tell us when you're glad to see him. What can I contribute to the deal? What can I add to this gathering? What could I take away from it? And that was beginning to happen slowly. And if that's beginning to happen to you, you're having spiritual awakening. Don't be afraid of it. You don't have to. We all had the same thing going on. As we felt new power flow in. And if it's happening, you know it's happening.

There's a sense of new power. Somehow I'm not lost anymore. As we enjoyed peace of mind, I found out

clarity of thought means peace of mind. If you're thinking one thought at a time, it's a much of peace. Okay. Jeez. As we discovered we could face life successfully. I wasn't getting out of bed anymore with this god awful sense that any second now something's going to happen. And what it does, I'm in real trouble because you're going to blame me.

That was gone. I began to sense that I was having the same experience these people had had before me. And they kindly shared that with me so I'd know you're not going nuts. I had to face some very particular fears to come to trust God. And in a penitentiary, you always sleep with your head on that end of the cell because there are predators and you don't want to get hurt. If they grab something, they got your feet. I had to face that down.

And I like to read. I began to discover books. And the only light was out in the hall. And so I put my pillow up on this end so I could read. And pretty soon I just began to sleep that way, trusting that I wouldn't be hurt. And I'm here. I began to sense this new power flowing in. I began to have this experience and I translated it into my own life. And that's what we have to do here. As we became conscious of his presence, I didn't know who him was.

But I can tell you, being around eight people, there is a presence. Otherwise we wouldn't keep coming back. I wouldn't, yeah. Something happens here that is what I want. And I can't identify it isn't that wonderful because then I try to run it. But I do know that when I show up in any A.E. meeting anywhere in the world, I'm okay. There's a sense of the presence of God here among us. So we began to lose our fear of today tomorrow and here after we were reborn.

You know one of the most frightening things in the world is to begin to lose your fear. That's what had kept me going for years. It's the only way I knew I was alive. And now it's beginning to go away from me. And they tell me, that's okay kid. And I had some really weird concepts of God that I had to be done away with. But what I share with my new people at this point is this happening. We come all the way to this and we don't go on unless this is happening in some degree or another.

And if this is happening the question is very simple. Whatever other concept of God you may have, can you trust this experience? Can you trust this? The sense of new power, this sense of wanting to contribute something. The sense of some sort of presence. Can you trust this? Is there anything in here that's going to hurt you in this experience? No, then that's what we'll surrender to. We don't need anything more than that to surrender to you.

And you know that works pretty good. You went through there. It's just bloody simple. Now, it is my belief and my understanding. The word amen in any spiritual system or whatever, the word amen means so be it. It ends it. We have just talked with God and turned it over. We've let it go. Amen means that. It's over. My part of it's over. And I would make an observation again from my own experience. There is no amen at the end of the third step prayer.

But there is one at the end of the seventh step prayer, which has led me to conclude and to experience the fact that prayer is not only that dialogue that I'm having or that monologue at the beginning. Prayer is an active lifestyle. The activity of the fourth and fifth step has only one purpose. And it is not to help me find out who I am. It's the early on I'm told that self knowledge will not keep me so over anyway.

And if it won't, then the purpose of this thing can't be for me to find out who I am. It says the purpose is to help me find a power greater than myself that will solve my problem. So what then would be the purpose of the inventory? Well, it says in here in the third step that I offer myself to God for him to build with me and do with me as he will. And we submit, we offer myself to thee. We use these in the vows. I just love watching everybody squirm when they have to do that.

Relieve me of the bondage of self. That's my problem. Not so that I can feel better. Believe me of the bondage of self, but I may better do thy will. Okay? Take away my difficulties. The victory of them will better witness to those I would help. If I love and I power my way of life. Take away my difficulties. I believe my greatest difficulty at this point is the difficult time I have being honest enough to do the rest of this deal.

I didn't have any other difficulties at the time I came to this. I was clothed and I was fed and I was given a task to do each day and then I was left alone. There's no difficulty in that. The only difficulties I ever have are within me. And the most difficult thing of all is being honest enough to say, this is just too much for me. I can't do this. So take away that. Now, what's the purpose of the deal? Well, our decision was a vital and crucial step, it says, but it could have little permanent effect.

Unless it once followed by a strenuous effort to face and to be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. From what? From this experience here, from the sense of the presence of God. The whole purpose of inventory, as I see it, is to help me find and be rid of the things that are blocking me from God. That promise made it possible for me to look at things in that inventory that would have killed me with the guilt.

Experiences where my son's almost got killed. The things I did to the people I loved the most. There's no way to face those without that sense that once I do, we're rid of them. I don't ever have to think that way again. And if I don't think that way, they don't come to my house. The kind of troubles that I used to bring on myself. To find and be rid of the things. So this isn't to help me find out who I am. It's to help me find out who I'm not.

So I can get rid of it. You know what happens after you dump what you're not? Whoever you are just shows up. It says in here that deep within each of us is the fundamental knowledge of God. The fundamental idea is already there. I don't have to go searching anymore. All I have to do is clear away the stuff that's blocking me from that. Completely contrary to everything I know. Completely. Now I'm an action person. How do I do this?

I want to punch punching bags and get into primal scream and all that stuff. Seriously. I get to put it on paper. And they're pretty smart. Once again I am told precisely what the problem is. I am not psychopathic. I'm not a sociopath. I am none of those things. I'm an actor who has learned to play that part well because it keeps you away from me. It tells me that I do not have mental or emotional problems. What I have is a spiritual problem.

Mercy of this is powerful. Resentment is the number one offender it says. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of a spiritual disease. If it's the granddaddy of spiritual diseases, if all of them come from there, that must be the big one. Resentment is a spiritual disease. And when I think about that it becomes apparent. What happens with resentment is that it separates me. And that's my problem.

I'm a spiritual being separated from God and other spiritual beings by resentment. It tells me that in their experience if I will get rid of that, I'll straighten out mentally and physically. Well I may not be the picture of

mental health but I'm not lunatic anymore. And I have some physical problems that are so minor that they're hardly even worth mentioning. The fact that I've lived this long is miraculous. I came here 133 pounds, literally burned out mentally and physically.

And he's restored me to good health. I haven't experienced in that dishroom where the resentment was wonderful around this time. I mean I bought this. This is true. I agree this is true. I'll work with it as true and eventually I'll experience it as true. But standing in that dishroom one morning, looking out over the mess hall. Now the mess hall is where most prison riots start because that's where everybody gathers.

You have utensils. You call them utensils. They're weapons. So they have the goon squad in there. The goon squad are the ones that are the baddest of all the guards. They're the ones that don't have any hesitation to stop things. And there's an overhead catwalk and there's two guys up there with Thompson submachine guns and the rest of them spread out through this thing. And I'm standing there just watching the passing parade.

And the executioner who's on the goon squad was standing in the doorway as the guys come in. This is the man that sloughs people. And I'm standing there thinking about it. Isn't this a bitch I'm thinking? Here's this little round fat man with no hair and big ears. And if you look in his eyes there's nobody home. And every now and then I'm thinking they tell this guy take him over there in that green room and kill him.

And he does. And he comes back and has lunch. It doesn't phase him. There's nobody there. And this man has control over my life. And then the thought came to me, yeah dummy. Who brought you here? Oh mercy. I couldn't resent this man. I don't approve of what he does. But I can't resent him. I brought me there. I gave him that power. If I resent him he owns me. And I don't want to be owned by the kind of people I resent.

I must come to unity. You didn't know what it says? We're supposed to. That's what this helps me to discover. I make a list of everybody I'm mad at. God that's easy. I can do that with a guy who's still drinking. I'm to put down who I'm mad at him. That's easy. That's all I ever think about. I'm to put down what negative effect that's having in my life. I'm beginning to take a look now of what that does. Well it separates me. Our personal relations are shot if I resent you.

You can be as nice as can be. But if I resent you we cannot make contact. Because I won't allow it. And if I think you don't like me, that same wall goes up. I've got to take a look at that. I can't be affectionate if I think you're mad at me. Or if I'm mad at you, I can't be that way. I can't be loving and kind. It's not possible. They don't fit in the same body. It creates all kinds of fear. I resent the kind of people that may be getting what I want.

Because that's mine. And you got it. There's those insane fears that I ran into. Not only afraid of losing something I had, but afraid of losing something I didn't have yet. Do you ever get into that one? Real clear thinking. I get to write it down on paper. It's infuriating. And then when I'm all through with it, it says that the key to freedom in this business is for me to set aside the wrongs others have done. Quite often other people really are wrong.

When you're like me, you pick people who are wrong frequently. Oh yeah, they were just like me. But that's as far as most of us ever saw. I'm just set aside the wrongs they may have done. And resolutely look for my own mistakes it says. Where am I to blame? Where was I to fault? These lovely people gave us very specific

questions designed to get to the alcoholics problem. Which is self-centeredness and selfishness. Where was I selfish? Where was I self-seeking?

Where was I dishonest? Where was I to blame? Where was I frightened? Or fearful? Where was it wrong? And as I got those things down on paper, they want them particular. Of course you heard me talk about some of you. A federal agent that almost shot my son in the middle of a drug arrest. My son let out a hoop and a federal policeman almost shot him. And I hated this guy. When I got around to doing this, there were 22 reasons I was mad at him.

That silly was only one arrest. He had made a criminal out of me. That's what I mean. You're not a criminal till you get caught? He violated my civil liberties. Absolutely enraged me. They came with a telegram not a warrant. The warrant hadn't gotten her yet. They jumped the gun. God, that's childish. On the list. And he'd almost killed my son. And when I got down to detailing where was I at fault? Well, I'd been smuggling marijuana out of Mexico and not paying the tax on it.

That made me his job. But the way we got caught when I tracked it back, the book talks about being able to find a decision based on self, somewhere in the past, that led to this. I was in Albuquerque, New Mexico with my two little boys hitchhiking around the country. Tired and broke. And a guy offered because he knew I was good at what I did, offered me a job. They were runners. And their man had gotten arrested on a traffic charge and they had a big load of marijuana sitting in a hotel and wore as needed to get it across the border.

And they knew I could do that. And they would pay me X amount of dollars and give me a couple kilos of this good grass at the same time if I go do that. And I said, sure, why not? I knew full well the guy that hired me, if he ever got arrested, would turn us all in. Because he was weak. But I'm impervious to that kind of stuff, right? And sure enough, six, eight weeks later he got arrested for something else and turned us all in.

So he didn't have to go to jail. So when I tracked it all the way back, even then I knew this was my fault. This was my fault. You can't live with that unless you know it's going to be taken away. The fact that I almost killed my son could not be born if I didn't know because I believed this. And in God's hands my thinking could change. And the next time somebody offered me a job like that, I'd say no thank you. And that's how it began to track.

This four step then became a spiritual activity whose purpose was to help me clear my mind of self. So that could come to trust in God better. And the fear inventory is a separate one. You can use the four common method we have here, but it's a completely separate one. It says I'm to ask myself, I'm list my fears and ask myself why I have them. And the way I do it, we put it down on paper. What am I selfishly trying to protect here?

Where self reliance fail me? I went through a period where I was a little afraid because I didn't have any money. And I was afraid my wife would leave if I didn't have any money. Well that's obvious. I'm trying to make this thing happen so that she stays on my terms. I wasn't trusting in God to take care of that. There's a time I was a little afraid of losing my mind. Me being afraid of losing my mind. It's been gone for years.

And the reason I was afraid of that was because I was selfishly trying to stay sane again on my terms. I was afraid that if I lost my mind I'd lose my contact with you and that I would lose my contact with God. And it made me afraid. But I was just selfishly trying to protect and do that on my terms to have the relationship with you and

with God on my terms. The stuff gets clearer. I just wasn't trusting in him. And that's all there is to that.

This inventory thing is no great big deal. It's just that. It's a look at the truth. So I can let go of that. I don't want it on my terms. My terms take me to the penitentiary and put my kids in foster homes. I want it on his terms. And so we get to clear all that stuff away. The sex inventory is a wonderful inventory. It has very little to do with sex after the first time. It has to do with my conduct. How have I been treating people?

And today I use the sex inventory questions to guide my business relationships, my home relationships. There's some terrific questions in here. Let's take the sex off for a minute and look at some of those. Where have I been selfish, dishonest, and inconsiderate? That fits any situation I can come into. Whom had we heard? Did what I just did hurt somebody? I can carry that one step further. Is what I'm about to do going to hurt somebody?

I can write that out on paper and get kind of a good look at it. Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness? That's a standard business practice. It is. That's how you manipulate a business deal. If I'm doing that, I better get out of the business. Whatever I'm in, I can look at it. Where will we at fault? What should we have done instead? And I can update that. What should I do instead? This becomes a guide for living.

What a wonderful set of tools we've got. And they're just not that hard to work in. I wish I could spend a whole hour just talking about inventory. Because it's so bloody simple. Why is that funny? No? Well, I think it is. Let's go. I didn't have anything left in my mind when we did it. I'm not going to read it to you. Oh, it must be in my other coat. What did I do with that? I just did some inventory. If my inventory goes more than one page today, I know I'm lying.

It's bloody simple. The truth is real simple. Somewhere I'm being selfish and self-seeking. And once I spot that, there's no big deal to it. In my experience in working with people, if they're doing the inventory out of the big book, generally in our exceptions. But generally, there's not much more than eight to ten hours of actual work involved. There are exceptions. But most people, eight to ten hours of actual work is all it really takes.

To get the resentment inventory done. A couple more hours for fear. And for people like me, ten minutes is enough on a sex inventory. I was not super-studded. It just didn't work that way. Now, what do I do with this information now that I've got it? Because all I have currently is a whole lot of really good reasons to go drink. Really? When I look at that and realize what a real creep I am because there isn't a good thing in here.

This is all selfishness. I've got a good reason to go drink. But I'm involved in this prayer at this point. And I'm protected and safe because we look at this because we're going to get rid of this. What I do with this next is that I'm to take it to someone. Another human being. And look them in the eye and share this with them. Because in that process I'm establishing contact. Because here's what happened in the midst of this.

I began to recognize that I'm not a human being trying to have a spiritual experience. I'm a spiritual being having a human experience. And the way I become a spiritual being in my own experience is to make contact with you. My friend Jim, whom I was feeling compassion for, is the one who heard my fist up. Because I knew the only thing I could do to make his life better was share the garbage of mine with him. And that afternoon we had something happen, Jim and I.

I stopped being alone for one thing. Up until that time it was me and who I needed you to be. None of you

were real. That afternoon there became me and a fellow named Jim. Two separate people in the room. As long as there's two of us you can't be alone. And I finished something. I had submitted and I finished it. I did the best I could. It was a shabby little inventory. I couldn't remember much. But I submitted it. I made contact with another human being.

The thing with Jim had an interesting ramification. I believe God leaves no open ends for me. It's always full circle. Jim came from Florida and I was released before he was. And so that would have been our last contact. I would never have known what happened with Jim. And I ended up eventually getting a job with a little paper company driving a little truck. And the only thing I didn't like about that job is that 430 all the other guys got to go home.

And my job was to take packages from the paper company over to the bus station and sit in line with all the other trucks to send these packages off by bus. And you never knew when you were going to get off. And it irritated me a little bit. And one afternoon sitting in the line, two guards walk in with Jim. I'm going to send him home to Florida. Had I not been in that situation, if I had my way and been on one of the other trucks, I'd have missed him.

And he'd have missed me. But because despite my discomfort, I don't run my life. I was there. We had five minutes. So that I know if I never see Jim again, he's okay. And he knows I'm okay. And that's the spiritual life. That's what comes out of this. I've never heard from him again. That's been twenty-some years. But I know he's okay. And he knows I'm okay. And that's what it's about. I don't have to worry about it.

So we shared that. And I went back and I reviewed it, like it says. Because I knew this was pretty shabby stuff. There wasn't enough information there. I couldn't remember what I'd done. But it wasn't up. When I asked God in his mercy, please don't let the things I haven't found yet kill me before I get to him. And I got to some more on the airplane coming up here. There's always plenty of information in there. The depth of my selfishness and self-centeredness is endless.

Endless. And it's all so small that my grandiose alcoholic mind didn't look at it. It has to be brought to my attention. The making of amends we had to learn was a spiritual activity. After the review, the seven-step prayer says just about what the third step prayer says. Only it really means it. The third step of making an offering is the seven-step I know full well what I'm doing. I'm making a conscious commitment to give my life entirely over to the care and direction of God Almighty.

From here on forward, it's me and him. And that's the way that is. And it reaffirms the only real weakness I have. It says in that prayer as I leave, please grant me the strength to do your bidding as I go out from here. That's my problem. I have good intentions. I have wonderful ideas. My motives are pure. I just don't have the strength. Because I just don't have the strength. So grant me the strength so that I can go do your work.

Another A friend of mine has reminded me from time to time where I'm not here to do his job. Just his work. LAUGHTER It helps to keep it in perspective. LAUGHTER The probably the most spiritual thing I know is the basic principle behind the eighth and ninth step. If I have wronged you, I owe you. That's all there is to this. I can spend two hours on the eighth and ninth step. If we sit and chat, maybe we'll cover some of it.

But I was in a circumstance where they wouldn't let me out to make a mess. LAUGHTER My sponsor who had killed some people was free of that. I knew it. I could see it. He was free of it. They were never going to let him out. No was there any possible way if they did it. He could ever go to those people. I wish I hadn't killed your family. Couldn't do that. So again, there must be something spiritual behind this thing.

Because the actions are secondary. Writing inventory is secondary. Very important. But it's secondary to its real purpose. The making of a man's is in my willingness, he said, that should circumstances ever permit me to do that, I am willing to do so and take whatever the consequences are. So how do you get free, Bruce? How do you get free? He sent me back to myself to make a list of all the people I'd ever harmed. And then when I had that list, I was to picture each one of them right in front of me.

And I was to see if I could feel a willingness within myself, all by myself in a cell. To say to each one, I've been wrong. If I've harmed you, would you please tell me what I have to do so we can get these books to balance. And that night I was lifted and set free. That was the only way I can describe the experience. So later on, I've done a lot of thinking about this one, because this is where you get back into the human race.

And we'll talk some more tonight about some of my direct events. But think about this for a minute. See, what he said to me was, you know what you did to these people, but you're so insensitive, you have no idea what it did to them. And as I thought over the years, I thought about some of that. Stealing from a friend. And you always steal from friends because they're easy. What does that do to somebody? Well, I know I owe them the money and I owe them the apology, but what that really did to some of my friends was diminish them as people, because they were no longer able to trust their friends again.

I lessened them. That's heavy duty stuff. I have to find some way to reestablish and reaffirm that trust in these people. And the only way I can do that is to live long enough to demonstrate it. The real business of making your men's takes time. I was told I was never to say, I'm sorry. I've been sorry my whole life. Never again. And I become a listener. And one of the things I love to listen to is people. Particularly people when they're bitching about other people.

You know, you get a lot of clues. Did you ever sit around the lunchroom or a gathering of people when they're talking about the one who isn't there? And what I hear, and this person in there, because they don't like them anymore, if they would only say they were wrong, I can forgive them. That's all most people ever wanted us for me to admit I was wrong. And I've carried that into my life. If I'm wrong, I'll square that up.

I've gone to some people to make more direct amends. And they've said, that's all right. We can let it go. You showed up. The only difficulty with that is that the word wrong won't fit the alcoholic mouth. I got to have a new mind in order to even say that. Being wrong is the most devastating experience for the human ego that there is. What the hell can you do when you just know, whoops, I'm wrong? You can't even say I'm sorry.

You can't carry it out. You can't do anything. I'm wrong. Well, we have to learn to go to those people and say, I was wrong. Here's what I did. Here's what I'd like to do, square it. Is there anything else that I need to do to square this with you? And most of them are so kind and so loving. They say, no, that's good enough. We'll start from here. Anyway, the making of a man's has been a long, long process for me. I'm still making some of the amends that I talked about when I first got sober.

But it takes time. And I'll share some of those with you tonight. I heard it click about running out of time here. But we'll get into some of that tonight because it's really heavy duty stuff. That's taking place today. The word of man, in addition to the restitution side, means to change. To make different. To make new. I looked it up in my book. If I'm going to make this a lifestyle, I got to know what it means. To restore.

To recover. I'm different. In God's hands, my life is not what it used to be. And can't be any other way. It's no better, no worse than anybody else's, but it sure as hell isn't what it used to be. And that's good enough. I don't need to be king of the world. All I have to do is be among you. The spiritual growth requires a number of things. It requires, first of all, that I continue to check on selfishness, self-seeking, and self-interest on a daily basis.

Not only the quick check stuff, but there's times it has to be written out. The 10th step also gives me an opportunity to, as my memory comes back, to deal with the stuff from the past that I couldn't remember before. There's a lot of those little things, and I did. It took a while to even recall. And I need to look at those sometime in time. Talk with someone regularly. We have guys we call sponsors. That's one of their jobs.

If we use them. My sponsor and I had some wonderful 10th step experiences for a period. I was in a very high-pressure business, and so was he. He was a headhunter for computer and accountants and all that, and I was a headhunter for ex-cons. Trying to get these guys' jobs. With a caseload of 135 people most of the time. Coming and going. This is high-pressure stuff. Well, the 10th and 11th step gives me some techniques I can use on the street for a live.

When agitated or doubtful, we're supposed to pause. Well, if I don't know what I'm doing, I'm doubtful. And that's most of the time. Anyway, the phone had rang and a guide come in, and pretty soon I'd start getting agitated. Because I really was concerned with each of these individuals. But by 10 o'clock, I'd seen five or six of them, and they were starting to mesh. Gary and I talked about that. And we began to apply this principle.

In between each one, I was to take a short vacation. To disengage from you. We go and be still and ask my father, what do I do next? And sit quietly until I got an answer. Either the phone would ring, or the receptionist would send me another one. And until she did that, I sat still. Pretty soon I could see 30 people a day because they were one at a time. And I'd do everything I could do for this one, then let them go, rest for a minute in God, and then go on to the next one and do the best I could for that one.

Let them go, rest in God, and move on. And it became a workable technique. People have asked me because some folks who know the kind of travel I've done for AA recently, how do you keep up the pace? And I can tell you honestly because I never asked that question. I don't have a pace. I don't keep up a pace. Each activity has a break, and it may be 100 breaks a day. But you don't burn out that way. And the secret is let go of the last one before you pick up the next one.

Let it go. I've done the best of goodness. It's all I can do. Maybe if it comes back tomorrow we can do more, but no more today. We're around. I am not capable of that by myself. I have to go to the Father and rest for a minute and say, now what? Now, when I got real tight, my secretary understood that when I shut the door, don't send anybody in. I laid down on the floor and started breathing and relaxed for about five minutes.

I also turned some things into some very practical things. About two blocks away was an oriental beef bowl.

Good stuff. It's just meat and rice, good stuff. 10.30 every morning for four years, they laughed at me. Because the beef bowl won't put into 10.30. And every morning at 10.30, my secretary knew I'm gone for a half hour. I needed a walk and I needed a beef bowl. And I tell you, don't take medication, go eat a beef bowl.

Best thing in a world of distress. What I'm trying to share with you is each of us, if we will follow the inner promptings, we'll find those little things that make that kind of activity possible for us. Some folks need to take a run. Some, my brother needs to sit down on a piano. That's what he's a musician. When he takes a break, he sits down at the piano. Because he's a musician, he's playing everybody else's music all the time.

When he wants to relax, he sits down and he plays for himself. What do we do? The suggestion was made to us is that when there's nothing else work, when the steps won't work, when meetings don't work, when nothing else works, what can we do? Go find another alcoholic to talk with. Not for me to feel better. But see if I can find so many feels worse than I do. And see if I can help them. Same thing. The best way for a bus driver to take a break is to get on a bus and ride it.

So those are the suggestions and they become very practical. The spiritual life is the most practical thing I have ever been involved in. It also calls for a great deal of solitude. Being in solitude requires a place. We're told that we're going to be rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence. We're going to have experiences that are extraordinary. That's what the word miracle means. Extraordinary. And we're going to begin to have intuitive thoughts and begin to trust them and actually live on them and count on them.

Hey, when you come into my house and you're sick and you want help, I don't know what I'm talking about. I have to pray. What should I say to this person? People think the guys at sponsor think I'm brilliant because I quick get out the big book and see what does it say about that. And I discover something in here and I get excited and they think I've known that forever. You know, I just discovered it. Okay. Because I'm pulling all the time.

I sponsor the formal psychiatrist and one of the best treatment centers in the country. And he can't stay sober. And I've been trying for a long time to find a way to say to describe our disease so he can understand it. And I'm praying and I'm praying and it came to me. I said, Don, what happens to you after the first drink? Oh, around the fourth or fifth drink. I started going crazy. I do. No, no, no, no. What happens to me after the first drink is the second drink.

He got it. All of my thinking didn't bring that to me. But carefully asking God, what can I see that this man can understand? Brought that to me. Well, I've created a place in my home where if the house is on fire, nobody will tell me. We have that in my house. If your door is shut, you're on your own kid. Privacy is absolutely required in order to have solitude. And solitude is absolutely necessary for meditation and those private times when it's just being shut off.

And I need more and more of that every day. I've learned to do it in the crowd. I can create that around me today. But the best time is in that little room, that little place. Now, if you're new and you don't have that yet, America provides you with one. Yeah. Our hang-ups give you a meditation room wherever you may be in a board room or in a factory or you can always go to the bathroom. And if you're in there, they won't knock on the door and tell you the place is on fire.

So early on, I did that a lot and I still do that a lot. When I haven't got any place to go, excuse me, nobody bothers me. And it only takes a minute or two just to gather the forces. So we've got it all. I probably want to do it. We've got it all. I guess we talked about the steps in a very inadequate way. But we traveled around a little bit with it. This is not a chore. This is a way of life. When the numbers come off of the steps, it becomes a whole deal.

There's little techniques in there we need to learn, but the whole deal is one package. And it doesn't take but about ten minutes to do it all. Because all it is is I can't handle this. God convinced me of that. Take this away from me and show me what you want me to do. It takes a lot of work for me to do that. I married the same lady. She's described by our beautiful name as one of the three most naturally spiritual women she's ever met.

And I gave her our big book one time to read. And she just smiled after she read it and said, yeah, that's about what I did. She does this so simply, it just makes me want to scream sometimes. But this is what she does. This is a spiritual path that we're on. And I'm really glad to be on it. Because I get to meet people like you. When I stop depending on people, he sent me the finest in the world. Thank you for letting me share this afternoon.

I hope to see some of you tonight and we'll explore some more.