

Fellowship of the Spirit

1993 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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My name is Don, but I am an alcoholic, and I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. My home group is the Denver Thursday Night Group. That's something important to do before we get started, because I'm a Big Book scientist. We are all here, and we are all technically good, and we know so much about all this, and we are right. We are ready. We are ready to do. In God's hands, we really do know how to avert death and tragedy for people, and help them. But of all the things I know, it's that human touch that goes beyond the Big Book that goes beyond everything we know. Four years ago, God sent me a very wounded person, so wounded that everything I know and everything I know how to do wouldn't work if he tried it all. So I just had him come by every day and ride around, and one day my wife had made cookies, chocolate chip cookies, and I gave him water, and he liked it. It ain't like he'd never had a cookie in his life. So she gave him a whole bag, and we got to my car, and he said, why would she do that? So I told him the truth. She thinks you're a member of the family, that's why. And it transformed his life that day more than anything I have ever done. It transformed him.

He's four years sober, and we're going to celebrate that. You want to come up and get your chip, Chuck? Okay, let's go to the dance. I look at the contrast here, and this is about contrast for me. This whole thing is about change. We went to Toronto one time in a little meeting in a church. I've really dedicated AAs. The church had caught on fire earlier that week, but the basement was okay, so the meeting went on. And an old timer just quietly said, this is all about change. If you are the same person two years from now that you are tonight, you will probably drink again. And this is all about changing. One of the changes I saw as I sat here is when I was brought to you, there was no other human being on this planet, literally willing to talk to me. I had used them all up, so this is impressive as hell to me. I had used up my turn to talk and listen and be there, and I was terribly wounded. Now I didn't come to you. I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous that believes that part of my life work is trolling for drunks, wetlands, dry ones, any kind, so I can give them the AA message and see if they're interested in checking it out. And the AA message is really absurdly simple.

If you're alcoholic, you don't ever have to drink alcohol again. And that's really all there is to it. I didn't even know I was alcoholic when you found me, and you really did come looking for me. I didn't know I needed you. I wouldn't have come to you for any reason whatsoever, because I didn't know I was alcoholic. Alcohol had been such a part of my life for so long that it was just a part of my life. When I cut to you, all the powers that me had me certified and classified. I was a sociopath type 2, psychopath, manic depressive drug addict, and very, very tired.

I had tried every means at my disposal through my entire life to find out all of what was wrong with me, but what could I do about it? Because there was no question there was something wrong with me. I was different. I made the mistake of matching that to my sponsor one time. I said, the reason you feel different is because you're different. I walked around terrified of my own mind, and I went to a moment and said, I'm terrified of my mind. He said, you have good reason to do that. You see what he was doing was what happens here. He told me the truth, not as he saw it. He told me the truth. He always held the nerve truth up in front of me. And I must tell you that I think the truth without love is cruelty. And I think confrontation without some kind of real answer is

outright brutality, and I'm opposed to it.

But you have always loved me, and you have a real answer. So you never had to lie to me or pussyfoot with me. Thank God. I started making alcohol because that's what you did. I kept drinking alcohol because that's what I did. I've never had any control over the amount of alcohol I drank. To this day I think the silliest thing I could think of would be trying to control my drinking. I don't understand the concept. Don't see any profit in it. Don't know why or anyone would want to do that. Alcohol changed me. A profound change. Not the first time I drank it. The first time I drank it, I was 11. We got into some homemade German beer and wheat puked. That was kind of customary when I drank, but I learned to do other things in between. But we went out east of Denver one night with a bottle of whiskey that fella had bought us and bought it, bourbon, to get drunk and half out. Because that's what the big boys did, and I really wanted to be one of the big boys. And alcohol changed me. Alcohol used something in me that I now know was very much like a spiritual experience. It changed me. Ideas and attitudes that were governing my life were suddenly cast to one side an entire new set of conceptions began to drive me. Oh boy did I like that. I went out there scared to death ugly stupid, frantic, angry, which was my normal life's emotional feelings.

Baffled. Had a couple drinks and I was wonderful. Because I had plans. That's the change that took place for me that night. I went from a reactor, a person who bounced off alive to a man who had plans. And they were really good plans for a 16 year old. There you are. There's a guy in my class who had been treating me right a shovel and I was going to meet him back to the drive in and whip him. And there's no question in my mind then or no. But I could have whipped him at that moment. And then when he grew on my class it hadn't been treating me with anything at all. And she and I were going to have a visit and I could have visited with her that night.

And that's really not a bad thing. Before I get back to the drive in I was nearly dead in acute alcohol poisoning. Because it is my nature. If you take one work that way you take ten of them. To this day my biggest problem is still lack of proportion in the ability to think straight. There's another one. Didn't you hear him? Somehow along the way we got to feed these kids that we produced. But he's got a good idea that I fell in love with. From now until sometime in 1995 we'll be at conference all the time.

My God that's not a bad idea. I have a keen, keen alcoholic mind. I really got sick that night. But I was sick for several days after that. And I quickly found out what caused that. Bonded bourbon. I've never had bonded bourbon since. But all I could drink I would have drank that. But I did it. I quickly found out what wouldn't make me so sick. It would give me the results I needed. And I began to drink for effect. When I found you and I read about me in your book. If we were going to fight that night, and at 16 you do, and you plan it. You're not stupid. You sit down and figure out which month you're going to go get whipped by. I drank vodka. Because when I drank vodka it changes me from a rather sweet fight and little kid to a really mean so SOB.

I'm mean. I was a Golden Girls boxer. So I learned from Tommy Golden. Fair play. But I also learned in my first Golden Girls semi-final if you play fair you make it whipped. So I drank vodka so I could be mean. And lose all of my standards. Set them aside. If we were going to have some girls around that night. I drank well. Dark Bacardi Run. The other doesn't work as well. Because with Dark Bacardi Run I am a lover. I am sensitive.

And I exude sexual energy. But I also need a script for everything in my life. And when I grew up the script

wasn't there. When you got to that part in the book it said dot dot dot dot. See you. I remember rolling up East Colfax one night. That's what we did. When we got old enough to drive and drink. Larry Goodman had an old 38 Ford and we'd drive up and down East Colfax drinking beer looking for girls. And I still remember horror the night we found some.

I always thought I was a reasonably decent person. I grew up that way. And even the alcoholism made me a people-pleaser. But I genuinely didn't want to hurt anybody. It was true. I wasn't a rather gentle person. You should know my parents. My parents are sweet. They really are. I always have been. They had moments. Dad did. When it wasn't all that sweet. But I found out who pushed his buttons. The first time he knocked me on my butt.

I was really angry with him and it was years before I remembered he had said something to me. And I looked at me and I said go to hell. Knock me on my ass. My troubles are my own making. I also quit saying that to him. But my perception of me, though confused, I was a reasonably decent person. When I got here and went through your process and when I got to you by the way, I didn't have much of a mind left. I am one of those that in addition to drinking alcohol, I shot speed for 14 years.

And took a lot of acid. And I damaged my mind. And then just one much left. And it took a while for my memories to come back. And if you're kind of new here, be really grateful for that. Really. Because some of those memories take more strength than I have it to be getting to deal with. And one of those is I can remember when I was 18 years old and a singer. And we won the acoustic of Japan in a bar. And I ran out of money halfway through a drunk.

And I picked my target and became a predator. I was going to rob one of the other drunks in the places. And down and out. I was going to hit him in the head and take his money for no other reason that I needed to keep drinking. And it was hard for me to remember that. But that's, I'll do anything when I'm drinking to keep drinking. I remembered one night that I tried to kill two policemen in a Rocky Mountain News reporter, this sweet guy.

This reasonably decent man. But I was drunk and they were wrong. And I had a gun in the house. And had it been that they, it took three of them to hold me down because my intent was to get that gun and kill all three of them. Those were hard memories sometimes. I wasn't through drinking that night either. And I was enraged. I remember the rage of the night the federal agents arrested us. That's a really mild term for that thing.

They came through the front door and the back door and the side window and knocked me to the ground, stood on my neck. Nearly shot my four-year-old son when he let out a shriek. Made some really ugly sounds in my direction. They called me names that I recognized. That didn't why I was enraged. This cop looked around us hobble we were living in. And said with great disdain, this is sure a hell of a way to live when I became enraged with him.

And I can remember laying on the floor wanting to scream at him. Tell me how I can do it differently, please. This isn't a hell of a way to live. I don't know how to live any other way. You kind of lose faith in yourself when those kind of things happen. Not the raid, but that I can't find a better way to live than living a hobble with a dirt floor and raise my children. God that's baffling. Now I know some regular people and given those circumstances

they would change their lives.

And somehow they have the power to do that. And I went to the federal penitentiary over that one. And my children went with my folks. And my mind returned and my talents returned. And my sense of things returned. And I was to be released in that penitentiary on December 14th, I think it was. My son's birthday was December 10th. And I needed to be home for his birthday in the worst possible way. And I brought all my resources to bear. My mind and my emotions and my direction.

So I could be there for that little boy. Because I dried out back in my life mind. And I took on the federal government from inside to prison and began to throw rits. And I got out 10 days early. And I got a bus to Albuquerque. And I had a drink. And I was three days late getting to his birthday. That wounded me. That also helped me understand when you found me that I am an alcoholic. That's what alcoholics do. You described that to me. After the first drink, I will drink.

And it has nothing whatsoever to do with whether I love my family or not. Or whether I love me or not. Or my inner child. Or not. I love you, Bob. It has nothing to do with any of that. It has nothing to do with what I want to do. Once I have a drink, that's all second. It isn't that it's not there, it's just second. And as you began to open me up to that, I understand that's what alcoholics do. Maybe I'm an alcohol. I was in my first federal penitentiary when I was 19 years old.

Because of alcohol. No other reason. I didn't rob a bank. I didn't roll a seder. When I drank alcohol, I get lost and I can't find my way home. And when you're in the Navy, that's a family. I missed a ship movement by 23 days. I hadn't planned that. I really hadn't. They were going to Korea. And I fully intended to be back there because it was clear that if you don't make this movement, they can shoot you. My partner and I missed it. He was a drunk two who works like he got us on a Pan Am clipper.

And we beat the ship to Japan by three weeks. Sounds like a good idea to me. It was really a mistake. See, I don't have any clue as to how upset our skipper was when we didn't show up for his little trip. He was probably grateful. We weren't his favorites. But I know how angry he was when they pulled into the dock and he looked down and there we were. I had absolute total complete rock bottom when I was 19 years old.

And it had to take, after a little prison term, a bad kind of discharge and I was back on the streets of Denver. A completing utter failure. Not in the eyes of anyone but me. All the dreams I'd had in two years were over. That's bottom. I was going to be a career saver and it was over. And all the promises I'd made me and all the good ideas that I'd had weren't going to happen. And it was over. And there's no bottom anywhere in there.

And when I hit in December of 1967, wasn't any deeper than that. But at 19 I bounced. That was my deal. That's the greatest term I did to the people that loved me the most. Is I kept getting up, fall down, I'd get up. And they'd say, oh look, he's going to make it. Because when I get up, at that time I was a sprinter in the game of life and when I got up, I really got off the line. I'm good. I'm desperate. I need a new life. And you tell me what to do and I'll help create that.

And I'm just wonderful off the line. But I get distracted easily. I have been on a spiritual search since I was a baby. I have known within myself that for me it would be spiritual. The mistake that I made along the way is that

I always thought that I was a human being trying to have a spiritual experience. The truth for me is I am a spiritual being, having a human experience. Which by the way has made me very human. I was a spiritual thief.

Take it from out here and put it in here so I get to feel better. My first contact with alcohol was much like a spiritual awakening. And I've done a number of things that gave me spiritual awakenings. But they were all stolen and you can't keep them if you steal it. And when you found me, I had run out of things to try. First place they sent me when I got back from Uncle Sam's Navy was to Dianetics. They put my mind to work and they gave me methamphetamine hydrochloride so I could become uninhibited and talk freely.

I got it worked. I volunteered for every drug research program going on in the city of Denver at that time. We took our first LSD deliberately to have spiritual awakenings and expand our minds. We knew Timothy Lurie. It was a noble enterprise. My father did this with me and awakened spiritually. Case that in the art through he still has ten hits. I sand those acid in his ice box. Once he awakened he didn't need that anymore.

I took the same stuff and I awakened. And I stole some more. I had been baptized quite often. It's a good experience. I became a baptizer at one point. I'm alcoholic. If one time into the water is good, let's have ten. I understand twelve steps before I ever got here. If you want to get in the water ten times, get ten people in Dawson. Wonderful experience. Some of them are still doing things. But I got tired of that. It didn't last either.

I want to play tonight. You've all heard me talk before. And I won't play a little tonight. But I don't want any of us to forget how deadly serious this deal is. What I would like to do is remind all of us, let's don't take it too seriously because it is only life or death. I raised some little boys on the street. I really, really tried in that first marriage to be a good husband and a good father. I really tried. I had a little insurance debit that I was running to make a living.

And I don't like you know about insurance debits. Those are the ones where the premium is two to six bucks and you collect the money every month because the people won't send it in. And you just run around and just do that. And I had sold, what was it, seven months I'd sold \$800,000 worth of new premium on this little debit because I didn't know any better. I was on a way to be in the millionaires club the first year.

The shining star insurance company. And in my eight months I had to take my paycheck to pay off the debit money because I hadn't learned that the money coming through me wasn't mine until it got through their books. And I quit that job for a much better job in Kansas City. I went to work for IBM training school selling courses and in three months I was sales manager. And writing the advertising. And making bucks of money.

Eight or nine months I had two little boys whose mother had abandoned ship and I had no job and I had no place to go. Mmm, ran home. And began that hard journey. Somehow I made that decision that I was not going to be Superman. That's what I tried to be. And it was now time to become super freak. I was lost. The boys now ran around this country for about four and a half years. Nothing in crash pads and being thrown out of them.

And I became a dope smuggler. That's what you do. Became a thief and a check writer. Whatever it took. It didn't matter. I just tossed all my values out the window. And life became a matter of expediency. Selling insurance, working IBM or dealing dope. The only consistent thing that I ever did was drink alcohol. It was there no matter what. And I got to you guys and I've done a little drama here tonight. And you took all my drama away

from me.

It isn't the drama that makes me an alcoholic. I tend to be dramatic while I'm drinking or not. The lights are just brighter when I'm drinking. Anyway, the upshot of it was that I had to die to get here. I had to use up every decent thing, every decent human being in my life to get here. My ego has been and still is so big that it took death to overcome it. It was a self-imposed death and it got me here. I entered into the surrender process Christmas week in 1967 by recognizing the lives of my life for lives.

That's what surrender was for me. I only had a few left. One of them wasn't I was a good father because the family was intact. The boys and I were together and we had a place to live and food. We lived in another hobble. The only reason we stopped is because I was now on federal parole and I had to report in regularly. And I saw the lie of my life. We lived in a dump. And the family was not intact. The boys and I lived together in a dump.

There's a difference. I know what Christmas is supposed to look like because I come from a very fine functional home. Not that we didn't have problems, but my parents always faced everything. This last weekend was interesting. My brother invited us up to the cabin for a family get together. It was 22 years before the amends I was making to my brother finished. It ended one night at his house, my wife and I having dinner.

And after dinner I said, I don't know if we're ever going to be friends. But I enjoyed this evening. It took me a long time to understand what I've done to my brother. He's a fine, fine musician. He was writing music for Stan Kenton when he was 19. And I loved jazz. And we ran him the same circles. My brother didn't even drink. I saw these musicians, marijuana or whatever else they needed. And along the way I did damage to the name of Prince.

And he'd show up somewhere with that name and he would be treated badly. Oh my. And I damaged him in that way. There is no pass away from me to go to my brother and say, I apologize for that Roy. I'm sorry I did that. It's meaningless. What I did was spend the 22 years making my life where it didn't damage the name anymore. And he and his own time came to that. Well this last weekend we were up at the cabin with him.

And it was really kind of fun. He wants me so badly to be proud of him. He's built this thing with his own hands. And that's why he wanted us to come up so we could see this wonderful thing he built. With his own hands. And I'm surprised of him. He and I are taking care of my folks now. They're in their 80s. I stopped by just before I came up here and there he was. Cooking breakfast for him. And we ran him around on errands and all that.

My brother and I had made peace and it took 22 years. I made just living my life right. I got to tell you I'd love to say you taught me that you didn't. A welfare worker taught me that. When I came out of the penitentiary they had my children. Said thank God. I was no use to them. And this welfare man came down to the jail just before they released me and said, so you'll know I don't want you to ever try to get your children back ever.

You are not a fit father. Don't you ever try to do anything to convince me that you are. I'll watch you. If I ever think you'll make a decent father I'll contact you. And he sent me free. I'd have to do a damn thing to impress anybody. And I've not done that with anybody since I've been sober. I've gotten about my father's business. And you can watch me and if you ever want to talk to me that's fine. Because I understand clearly that I single-handedly and personally destroyed everything worthwhile in my life.

And I have no right to ever expect anyone to ever talk to me again. You see, I don't have any rights left. I used them all up. And if none of you ever talked to me and I had to live in, wherever it was, all by myself, forever, that would be justice. Thank God that God has made something useful in my life. When I went to my folks on Christmas Day, the last of my lives were destroyed. My dad noticed at the door and he said, Don, I'm sorry, but your mother said I can't let you in here anymore because she can't stand watching you die.

And I had some clarity. I understood precisely what was going on. And the next last lie went off the window. I had been screaming. Leave me the hell alone. I'm not hurting anybody but me. And it was clear to me at that moment this is a lie. I could see what I'd done to my mother and my dad and my kids and everybody that ever knew me. I'd hurt everybody. And then Dad snuck us in the house. It just tore me up because it ruined my last lie.

I've been saying nobody cares about us. Nobody loves us. He did. I didn't hurt any lies left. So I didn't come to you because of the truth. I just ran out of lies. I went home and walked through the self-pity that was there and into the truth. And the truth was a terrible thing that day. The truth isn't always comfortable. There really wasn't any reason for me to be here. I had become what I'd always been afraid I would become.

Absolutely useless. I knew that everybody on the planet would be better off if I wasn't here, but particularly those I loved the most would be better if I weren't here. So I took a two-month supply of the garbage I was using and shot it into my arm and drank everything in the house and I'd done and died. And I really died that night. We both didn't have any fun either. The place with the door, but I didn't feel good.

I went 133 pounds. And I didn't know who I was. And I didn't the first time that had happened. The police drove me out of a stream and boulder one time with my boys with me. And I can remember screaming at the people that were watching this go on, won't someone please tell them who I am? I didn't know. I'd lost my mind when I didn't know who I was. Yeah, what that cop said was true, this is a hell of a way to live. I ended up in a padded cell that time.

We took my boys away. And I went to sleep in one cell and woke up in a padded cell because of the kindness of the police. I'd gone into some convulsions and done some things and the afraid was going to hurt myself. And I woke up in a padded cell and thought, this is interesting. Let me get out of here. That didn't do anything at all for me. I read about the various things that we have to have to get an alcoholic's attention.

I understand that. The message has to have depth and weight. Because the greatest desire that I had to not do this anymore was of absolutely no value. I will tell you that today I have lost the power of choice. Not only in drink, I have lost the power of choice. Thank God. I've never regained it. God did not give me back the power to choose whether I drink today or not. Every single time I had the choice I made the wrong one.

I am so grateful I don't have a choice today because that means that allowing with other things, whether I drink alcohol or not, is none of my business. My name I had to drink since. They took me away. Oh, God. So much hydrometer. It was wonderful. The power of God went to work in my life the moment I died. And I know that. It shares them standing here. I didn't know the name. I had not worked the steps. I had done nothing to participate in my own recovery.

But the power of God went to work. The state and the feds decided to send me to four-word Texas to the

hospital down there so they could fix psychopaths, social path management, domestic drug addict. And I was supposed to go. The federal people had said, yeah, we'll do that. And the state said if you'll pay guilty to a lesser charge, we'll turn you over the feds and you can go. And I did. And ended up five days later in the Colorado State Penitentiary.

Because the parole officer changed his mind and said, wait a minute. We can't help this one anyway. Just lock him up for hurts anybody else. That happened to me by the grace of a loving God. He brought me to you. Oh, I gotta tell you something. I've been living in the same house, married to the same woman, raising the same kids, long enough to outlive an entire dog. Sixteen years now. I was through raising kids. I had just finished raising seven.

Boy, that was a journey. I had one investor at the base of a 14,000 foot mountain. And I worked behind the walls of the Reformatory six hours a day. And the rest of my life was whatever the hell I wanted to do. If I didn't feel like going fishing, I didn't. I could go fishing every day. We had a big old black dog and a white cat with blue eyes. And two teenage boys, we were in pig heaven. Absolutely. I had finished my adolescent stage in life.

And I didn't care whether I got married again or even saw another woman. I was just fine. Me and my God and my dog and my kids. And I can remember telling him one day, whatever you have in mind is fine. But I don't care. I'll stay here on this mountain forever. And two weeks later, he brought her into my life. But I wasn't impressed. It was a blind date, which I don't go on. But I believe God sends me little messengers because I'm too dumb to read the truth or understand it.

And my messengers, God speaks to you and I heard him through Jimmy's voice. He said, please meet this lady. My wife works with her. And she's just on my back every minute. She thinks you guys need to meet. I said, I don't do that, Jimmy. He said, please, just once. You don't have to fall in love. Just come to dinner. And because Jimmy's my own God's children that I trust, I went. And I went impressed. It was a really pleasant evening.

And when I got back to the mountain, I thought, my goodness, it was a really pleasant evening. I would do that again. I don't want three months later it became apparent that we either made this a lifetime commitment or stopped seeing each other. And I had to go back to the mountain for three days and consciously think about that. Being in love with Jackie was not enough. It just wasn't enough. And I looked around me and I thought, my goodness, I have everything I wanted in my life.

And I married her. I have to give up this mountain and this job and raise two more kids. And I loved them, but two little girls, five and three, was not what I had in mind. I went through all the reasons I should and all the reasons I shouldn't. And I came to one, I couldn't get past. I want to grow old with this lady. That means when all the stuff that makes your eyes roll back in your head doesn't work anymore, you stay anyway.

So I began raising kids, three and five, me and Kelly. You taught me about family and about how to be in a family. And they've taught me about love. And it had me always been smooth. I don't know if you've ever lived with two little girls about, but it's different than one of seven of any other kind of human beings. I remember one morning, what were you? Nine and ten, something like that. I have never been in such fit spiritual connection.

My morning meditation was truly a marvelous thing. The house was quiet, my spirit was quiet. I wasn't walking around the house, I was just kind of wafting through it. And the girls were in the kitchen fixing their breakfast. And Lisa said to Kelly, and I did the most stupid thing I have ever done in my life. I said, stop that. I didn't understand that. In little girl talk, that means, oh, dad wants in the game. And since I'm bigger than they are, the volume went up so that they would be a fair playing field.

And I did the second most stupid thing I've ever done in my life. I said, knock that off. Which means, to ten year old girls, we got him. And the volume went up, and my volume went up, and I went from Mr. Cool to a raving maniac. There is no way to win in that arena, and I knew that. So I changed the arenas, I said, get to your rooms. And they ran up the stairs and went to their rooms and slammed the doors. Now in my home privacy is of utmost importance because the spiritual life requires solitude and the human condition requires privacy and solitude.

But they slammed the door. And I was up those stairs in a single bone, taking the doors off the hinges, screaming if you're going to slam them, you're not going to have them. And they're laughing. This game has become fun. See the mad man go. And I carried them doors to the basement. I was filled with energy and fury, and they went on school. And I got to the bottom of the stairs at the basement with what had been really light doors upstairs.

And now they were heavy. And my mind has someone in it that said, cute dummy. What you have to do now is turn around and carry these things all the way back down. Rehang them. And when these girls get home, you have to apologize to them for being such a jerk. But I hadn't done anything. What I did, and I did what you had taught me. If that happens to me, I'm suffering again from spiritual melody. If I'm separated from any of God's children, I am separated from God.

And I was not separated from them. And I needed to find out what's behind this one. And it wasn't hard to find out. This was my home, my sanctuary, and nobody causes that kind of disruption in my house. I had forgotten it's our home. And the solution came to me. They didn't change. They still go, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh. But I found a solution. When I do that now, I send myself to my room. I'd have missed that if I'd have stayed on that mountain where I was totally content and happy.

I'd have missed it. And I'll tell you something else I'd have missed. My little daughter, these girls have two dads. Their other dad is a Denver detective, a very interesting man. But when she was about seven, Callie had to write a piece at school about her dad, and she picked me. And then she let me read it. Six or seven pages of some of the finest stuff. I was just really glad I knew me that day. This was a wonderful human being.

But in her last paragraph she said, if I would have had a choice, I would have picked on for my dad. But I didn't have a choice. So God picked him and brought him to me. That's nice. No, and that's powerful. But it rocked me and still does. I had to find, why does that rock me like that? And I'll tell you why. Because that's how I feel about you. I'd have had a choice, I'd have picked you. And I didn't have any choice left, so God picked you.

And brought me to you and brought you to me. So I belong to Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm not just a member. I belong to Alcoholics Anonymous. But I'll tell you something else, I don't believe you can keep me sober. I believe without you I will surely die, just as sure as I'm standing here. I'll die of loneliness and I'll die of

fear and I'll die of uselessness and I'll die of alcoholism. But you can't keep me sober. I don't believe the book Alcoholics Anonymous will keep me sober.

I've known people that have done everything they said and they're when I drank. I don't believe going to meetings will keep me sober. I believe without meetings I'll probably die. Without reading the book I'll probably die. But I see a lot of people go to meetings and die. We have a dear friend who about three weeks ago, after six years of sobriety, began again. And we've talked about why. Because he was making four and five meetings a day sometimes.

Belong to A-A-N-A-C-A-S-A introduced me to several of his inner children. And the day came when without thought he walked in and started again. The only thing he didn't do was enlarge his spiritual life. He did all the things and drank. But I belong to you. And I'm sure glad. You are the most entertaining group of people I've ever been. My wife taught me about love. And still love everything I know about love in a marriage.

I learned from her everything. It wasn't always comfortable. We kind of made a deal. I had these two louts that I was raising. Two teenage boys who were louts. And they misbehaved immediately upon our getting married. And she came and he wanted to answer. Those are your children. I have no intention of being their mother. They're too old for that. Straighten them up. That's your job. Whoo! Okay. Well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

When the girls got beyond me, they were her children. And they got beyond me one day. So I sent myself to my room. And I knew that she'd get them straightened out in about 20 minutes. And then she'd come tell me, okay, you can come back down now. A couple hours later, it occurred to me you're going to starve to death up here. You see, that's what real love is. Now you taught it to me, but she realized it for me. She never, ever tries to fix me.

And God help me if I ever try to fix her. We don't fix each other. We've been nine over 16 years and we haven't had a fight yet. Not one. We've had several disagreements. We don't have fights because it's clear to me that after about two sentences, I'm wrong. I was completely fulfilled before I met Jackie. Completely. Because I was filled with God and had been for years. And everything in my life was complete. I did not need her.

She was filled and did not need me. And that's a good way to start. Somehow the needs I have, she helps fulfill them by subversion, but are still the same way. What a wonderful way to live. I just get to love her for fun and for free. Help me how to do that and she helped me realize it. We live in a home. I'm a neat freak because I have a very badly damaged mind. I really have to have things in a place where when I can't remember why I went from the first floor to the basement.

I can go back up and remember it and I'm going for something. So if I were in my right mind, where would I put that? And I love my three ladies, but they're messy. Well, they are. Remember pig pen, Linus? They walk in the house and things begin to appear everywhere. And that used to bother me. Today I love it. It's a sign of a home. It's the kind of place where the wounded ones can come and they're safe in my home. And I'm safe in my home.

Because it's God-centered. I went and talked about God much in my house. He's just there. Life is not always

wonderful. I hope I haven't embarrassed you girls. I have been trying to tell you. I'm very proud I am of you. But please get your panties off the staircase. I was hand carried through the recovery process we call the steps in five weekends. By some people who had done what it said in our book and it had specific results and were passing it on to me because that is what this is all about.

My sobriety is not for me. It's for you. The minute I think it's for me I will lose it. And my early sponsors taught me that. There are two marvelous lines in the big book that are promises for me. And they're the first two lines in the big book. We're more than 100 men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. You're new here, please. Dear God, no. You do not have to stay sick. And having recovered now what?

To show others precisely how we recovered is our purpose. To simply show others precisely how we recovered. And part of that is this journey through the book and through the steps. But a larger part I believe is for me to expose you to the things that have brought meaning into my life and sobriety. And you know what they are? You're sitting next to one of them. This is about people. It's all about people. One alcoholic sharing with another. With only one thing in mind.

I don't want you to die wounded. I don't want any of you to die wounded. Because that's what happened. You and I suffer from a disease that does not kill instantly. It's a mean killer. I believe if I went out and drank today, that I would not die tonight. I would live a long time. Mean. And I don't do that. And I can't stop it. And you can't stop it. God has stopped it. I have recovered from alcoholism. I no longer suffer from any of the symptoms of active alcoholism.

I don't drink alcohol. I don't think alcohol. I don't have any of those goofy things going on. But I'm in a human condition and I have a lot of goofy things going on. But I believe that the only way that I can maintain that is to maintain an attitude. And I work with others to get that. I want to share a couple other things with you that are coming to mind. Because you know a lot of people with long-term sobriety here.

I'm watching a horrible thing happen in Alcoholics Anonymous. You young slippers are no big deal. I'm so glad we recognized the oldest in sobriety. I'm tired of going to conferences where the guy who slipped 18 times and now is weeks over again gets all the applause. And if you've been here for a while, I believe we are in grave danger. I'm watching people with 10, 15, 20 years of sobriety drink again. And they're not getting back. They're dying. They're dying quickly and ugly.

And I had a couple of experiences that gave me what I need to know about that. I don't believe that I am in danger of the lies anymore. You'd really have to work on my head and I'd have to be really working on it too. To convince me of the great lie that it's alright for me to take a drink for any reason whatsoever. They don't keep me sober, but I know about that lie. I'm in danger from the truth. I fly a lot. And as a result of that, I get little coupons now and then let me move into first class if there's a seat open.

And about two years ago, I was coming back from somewhere on one of the light flights. And I've been upgraded and I'm sitting in first class and the lights were on my book and the ambiance was just, you know, I wouldn't pay for it, but I sure like flying first class. And they served dinner and on United Day even used to have a little flower vase with a, oh, it was lovely. And they served this guy over here next to me and she poured some

of this deep burgundy stuff into a glassy head there.

And I caught it all the side of my eye. And my mind said, that really looks good. That's the truth. It really did. The light was hitting it. No thought of drinking. No sense of danger. That looked good. That was the truth. And then my mind said, I bet that would really taste good. That's the truth. It really wasn't. No thought of me drinking it. They gave it to him because it was going to taste good. Then my mind said, I bet that's going to make his whole dinner taste better.

Of course it is. That's what they gave it to him. That's the truth. And a prayer began in me. I did not start praying. A prayer began in me. And I became aware my next thought would have been. Maybe I ought to have one of those. You have led me to a God that prays for me when I can't or when I don't know I need to. When in those strange times it comes to alcoholics. When the information I have available about alcoholism and the program and life don't show up.

And I relax. And then I looked once more. Then I began to pray. I began to participate in my own recovery. And I think we all get a free ride here for a while. But eventually I have to participate or I'll lose it. I don't believe we're all that smart. I've been talking to you for years. I just really haven't noticed a great deal of all that smart. I don't believe we're all that slick either. You know what I like most about new people? They teach me effective prayer.

You come into my house, put your life in my lap, and face me with the fact that I don't want to do with this. I don't want to say I don't want to do. God please show me what to do here so I don't kill this guy. What you and I are are healers. We are healers in the highest sense. Now what is a healer? If I'm going to be one I want to know what that is so I can learn better how to do that. I live with a healer. She's a nurse and she works with little babies.

I'm going to try to draw an analogy here from my heart. Her little babies are sick and she can't tell them what's wrong with them. You got to know what's wrong with you to get participating in your own healing. She can't tell them what's wrong with them because they don't understand. God that sounds like Chuck. I could tell them what was wrong with him. He wouldn't understand. You got anything like that? So what does she do? I've watched her. She holds them in her arms and pets them and says you're going to be alright.

You're in the right place. You got to be just fine. And there's a conviction in her that communicates that to these babies. Some of them, some of them die. But some of them get better. And I think alright how does that fit with what we do? Well this sick monkey you can't understand English walks in. And then no question is sick. He didn't even have to open his mouth. And we put our arms about him. Touch him. And we touch him.

And we tell him you're in the right place. You're going to be alright. You come on here and be with us here. And we pat him and pat him. Okay that means I'm on the right track if that's what I'm doing. I think of the other healer, the greatest healer of all. He'd walk along these roads and he'd come across some poor guy covered with sores and crippled and blind. And the guy thought he was alone because he was covered with sores and crippled and blind and no one would have anything to do with him.

This healer knew that he was covered with sores and was crippled and blind because he thought he was

alone. And he would reach out and he'd touch him and he'd say, is there anybody there? Now a powerful thing happens a minute you touch a human being who thinks they're alone. They're not. The minute you touch them they're not. Whether it be with a hand or a voice, whether they like it or not, they're not alone. And all he did was get their attention. And he'd say, you don't have to do this you know.

You want to get out of there? What do we do? And we're doing this the way I was taught. After we got their attention from a minute we ask him, if you want to stop, do you want to do something about this? And if we do, if they do we do what he did. He would say, all right get up. And the sores would go away. And they'd get up. In some cases he told them, don't tell anybody. Most cases he said, don't tell everybody you're running to.

What we did here. And that's what we do. And that's all we do. We've had some really wonderful workshops here this weekend. Does anybody remember what anybody said? I don't. Well I will never, never, never forget. Kerry walking up to me saying, you know, I really love you. I'll remember that forever. I believe in sponsorship. I don't have to tell you any more than that. And I believe in God as a living, breathing thing that I no longer have to search for because where I am God is.

My sons were badly wounded by my lifestyle. There's nothing I can do to fix that. Nothing. It's done. The only thing I can do is create an arena where they can have an opportunity to get well also. We call it home. My younger boy, who by the way you might keep an eye out for, he's giving some indication that he may have a slight touch of alcoholism. He got paid last week and I haven't heard from him since. Anyway, but my older boy is not.

And it did great damage to these kids and we talked about it over the years and tried to set it straight. And Sean and I made peace years ago, but with Terry it never happened. He was never again part of the family and there was no question he was pissed at me for something. And when I thought of my son, my heart hurt. Just thinking of him, it hurt. And his heart hurt. And we tried and it just never worked. Just was never part of the family.

Well, I stay involved in the step process, the recovery process, the pathway to God by working with other people. I've always got five or six folks. I'm just walking through that and I do it with them while we go. So I don't know where I am in the steps. I don't have numbers out of steps for me. I'm just doing this deal. But every now and then I have found it necessary to put myself in the hands of a trusted friend in AA, and let them carry me through the steps as if I were a newcomer.

And when I rotated from being trusty at large, and I was really at large, man, we still haven't recovered from that. I was sitting in my basement, in my basement, in my home, in my chair. I don't know if you have one, but you ought to have your chair. Surrounded by the momentos of love that people had given me over the years, my family was upstairs. My wife, my daughters, been Daisy. And my head is saying, where's mine?

You promised me, God, that if I would stick close to you and do your work well, you would provide everything I need. When I'm 55 years old and I'm broke, where's mine? And I knew it was time. So I put myself in his hands, and we walked through this little deal that would have taken us two weeks. It didn't take forever, by the way, to clear the decks so I could just talk with God again. I believe God talks to me directly. He sounds like you, because he uses your voices a lot.

But there is, in my life, a very precious time. When my sponsor promised me, I could learn to think one thought at a time, and I can. But there are times when I can sit in that quietly in that place, and not think at all. I just go to my garden and hang out with God, and I'm not thinking. And after we'd cleared the decks, I was able to once again do that. I believe that's what the steps are for, you know, to clear my mind so I can become still and hear the voice of God, because he never yells.

He's done y'all. I got a really quiet minder, I won't hear it. And I began to think of Terry, with the pain in my heart. The last time I got arrested, so did my two old boys. One was eight, and one was six and a half. And I went to the penitentiary, and they went to a very bad foster home. Very bad. We've talked about it. It was a bad place. And Terry had to grow up, and ate very quickly, grow up to protect his little brothers from the violence in this place.

I know that because he's told me that. Some of his childhood was stolen from him, and it was my fault. I didn't steal it from him, but it was my fault. And he had done a wonderful job protecting Sean when he was eight. And I got the new thought that I had never thanked him for doing that. And I immediately got a hold of this boy. And I said, I know we've talked about this a lot, Terry. But I want you to know that I think what you did that time was a very brave thing.

And I want to thank you for taking care of your little brother when I couldn't. And I heard his voice change. It was just different. Now, I get Denver Bronco tickets. I don't know what they do, so I don't go. But the kids like him, and a couple weeks before this, I had some tickets, and asked Terry if he wanted them, and he came by and got them and went. With a quick thanks, Dad. Two weeks after our visit, this was November of 89.

I called him and said, I've got some Giants tickets. Would you like to go? He said, Dad, are you going to go with us? That's new. About six weeks later, he called me. And for those of you who have children, this is the drill when they call. Wait and eventually they'll tell you what they want. They do count something. And I waited, and we visited, and I waited, and we visited. There were about ten minutes that occurred to me.

My son and I had been visiting for ten minutes. That's why he called. He just wanted to visit with me. When he first got married, I don't know if it was Puerto Rico or Guatemala or wherever. He planned the wedding the weekend. I was out of the country, so I couldn't be there. About two years ago, he got remarried, and he had me do the ceremony. Well, that ain't all. A few weeks later, he called, and he said, Dad, Angie and I and the kids are going to Indianapolis to visit her folks.

We're leaving Friday about three in the afternoon. We'll stop in Kansas City for a rest, and then we'll press on to Indianapolis. Spend three days here to turn around and come back. We should be back in Denver next Saturday, about three. And my heart soared. That's how family members treat each other. He didn't want me to worry about his journey. He's also very, very practical. Gary lives in Indianapolis, and Terry knows some trips he's taken with me that along the way from Denver to Indianapolis, I know somebody in every single town where you can get a cup of coffee, or a hamburger, or a safe house.

I have had occasion recently to have to face the fact that I'm once again mortal, and I'm not going to be here forever. And the main benefit of that is that I've had to look at, is there any unfinished business? Yeah. And there were a couple pieces of unfinished business. I have three heroes. My dad's one of them. But I've never told him

that. So about three weeks ago, I backed him into his office. He's got a narrow passage where he couldn't get away from me.

And I said, pop, I want you to know you're one of my heroes. And I wouldn't get out of his way. He had to stand there and cry. I loved it. He's one of my heroes. I had to have a series of biopsies. And my son, Terry, called me one afternoon and chewed me out in my heart sore. Why didn't you call me and tell me you were going into the hospital so I could take off work and come hold your hand? Two things I know about all this.

The depth of my alcoholic self-centeredness is clear to me. It took me 22 years a full inventory, a full walk through the steps and an act of God before I thought to thank my son. That's how self-centered I am no matter how I try. I'm also fully aware that one day sooner it would have been too soon for Terry. He wouldn't have been able to hear me. It's all in God's time. All I must do here is keep myself prepared. Well, God just sent me one of his messengers.

Now, I know it was one of his messengers because I didn't go look him. And because I've watched this guy for years, he is one of God's messengers. And he's asked me to come work with him. He's one of my heroes. And I'm going. I offer this for you before I sit down. I've had a case and you stay home for the last four months. Because you couldn't even tie my shoes sometimes. And by the way, I'm not dying. I don't have cancer or any of that stuff.

I've got Gabralons in the hemoglobin. I don't want to go to the hemoglobin. That's a phrase my grandpa always used when he couldn't figure out what's wrong with you. You've got Gabralons in the hemoglobin. Give him some chicken soup and put him to bed. I was sitting on my back patio two weeks ago in my house. I'm a patio. Looking at the trees, this genius of a lady has planted trees in our area in such a way that if I sit just right I don't know I'm in the city.

And this year I had peaches on the peach tree. An apple's on the apple tree. And there's even some of those little apricots with edible seeds that are growing. And my home life is good. Everything about my life is good. I understand my illness is just part of the gift. I mean I'm really content. If you ask me to make a list of the things I want in my life, I've got them all. I have a home group that I love dearly. There is nothing missing in my life, nothing.

And on a week and a half or a week I'm going to stand up and walk away from all of that. But I won't lose anything. And it isn't easy. You will understand this. I don't tell straight people this. They really don't understand. I don't know what my new address is. I don't have a clue. I don't even know what my new job is, accepting broad parameters. I don't know how I'm going to live. I don't have any idea what they're going to pay me.

I just got to paperwork two days ago. I don't know anything about this except one of God's messengers called and said, we need you down here for a while and I'm going to go. When I married this lady, I made her one promise and one promise only. Other than the commitment and my commitment is strange. If you want me out you're going to have to put the shit on the porch and call the sheriff. And the decision this made means I have to talk to her about it.

And her response was, you can't possibly afford to pass this up. She knows we're not going to lose anything

either. That sounds like a lot of drama and it is. But you have taken, and it's because of you, a very wounded animal that had to die because it could not find any reason to even chew its leg off and get out of the trap. And because of you and what we've done here, I have an opportunity in the last years of my life to make a genuine contribution back to the society that I hated so badly.

My life means something today. And for you new people, there is no greater thing here than that as far as I know. Your life means something too. God gave me back my life as a free, clear gift and then brought me to you so the gift could take on dimension and purpose and meaning. And if you're here, he has brought you here so your life can take on dimension and purpose and meaning. What did I do with my son? I said thank you. So I did.

I've been thinking about that lady. What does that mean? I'm learning thank you in every language I can come up with. Thank you is an acknowledgement of you as you. It's not my vision of you, it's you. Thank you is the 12th step, it's all it is. I wish I could thank God for what I've been given. But the whole concept of God is beyond my comprehension and he knows that. So he gave me you. So from me, through you, to my God.