

DON P ARCHIVE

# Big Book Weekend

2001 | Part 4 | Reading edition

| FORMAT         | DURATION | RECORDING ID           |
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| Transcript PDF | 01:29:44 | DP-2001-STONYPPOINT_04 |

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# Transcript

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Eight years later, Kansas Bureau of Investigation and Judge and a couple of lawyers and a good doctor were all sitting around saying, what are we going to do with this boy? Which was a familiar topic. They were in people sitting around in meetings since I was about five saying, what are we going to do with this boy? I'm never real bad. I am just enough off-center that it alarms people and they have to have those conversations.

What are we going to do with this boy? I'm a kid that my mother can say to me when I'm five, six years old, we used to go see my grandparents. And they lived out in the country in a little ranch in the southeastern Kansas. And from the house about a mile down the road and through an old cornfield was a river. And so parents would get us up on Sunday morning. They'd say, okay. They'd start getting ready for Sunday school because there were a lot of us. And so I would get already. And then my mother would say to me, son, stay on the porch and don't go to the river. And I'm thinking, okay. And I honest to God as I reflect on this many years later, I cannot tell you why I'm going down to the river. Nothing real wrong with that is there. Except you have to go to the river.

You have to go through a barbed wire fence to get to the river. And I go through that barbed wire fence and I can hear something go rip. And I've caught the back of my shirt on the barbed wire fence. Now I got to figure out how to wait to stand with my back to everyone for the next few hours until I can get that shirt off. And so we go through this whole drama, we'll call it that. The end result is my mother pulls the shirt out of the washing machine and she says, son, where did this tear came from? I said, I don't know.

Cheap washing machine, I guess. Hell, I don't know. And my plan was to simply stay on the porch like I was told to do. See, I just cannot quite fit and do what I'm supposed to do. I can't do the right thing because I don't have the power. God knows I'd like to. I really would like to. So when I get down to this point, I look to where do my life got to. And the facts, they just build upon themselves again and again and over and over until it finally comes down that I have to get a real clear understanding.

You know an old timer has to be careful when you say that. You get a clear understanding. Hey, your understanding is this is clear that it's going to be to you. My understanding that I have today, I keep talking about a clear understanding or clarity. A lot of that clarity comes with passing time. Truth the matter is that I looked at this about 10 years ago, 13 years sober, and this whole deal about God was very troublesome to me.

I thought I had to have a relationship with God in order to go through the steps. I really believe that. I thought you had to be good in order to have a relationship with God. If you're good, you don't need to go through the steps. And so I had great difficulty with this thing. And I'm walking the streets of Denver late at night. And there's nothing worse than the psychic pain created by disconnecting from the spirit.

You know that's what we have. Disconnect from the spirit. Yeah, we're all alone. I can't connect with you. I can't connect with spirit. I can't connect with anything. I'm terribly alone. And when you finally reach a point where the aloneness is too intolerable, then at that point you are ready to perhaps concede that there may be a power greater than you. And it really doesn't make any difference what that power is, or what it's like. Most of us

have a conception of God.

And I like what Don talked about when he says, you know, concept versus conception. My conception of God has very rarely stayed the same. I mean, it never stays the same for very long. And my conception of God today is so limited. My conception of God today is more limited than it was 10 years ago. I'm not just beginning to accept the fact that God is and that he's got the power. And it's certainly all the power that I need.

And it just begins to get very, very simple. I can't do it. I really can't. There's a power which can help solve my problems. And I think I'm going to give this thing. I don't have anything to lose. Have you ever been in that spot? I don't have anything to lose. What do you have to lose? My wife, bless her heart. She had listened to a bunch of us guys. We formed a little small A group. We were meeting in the living room in the house.

And we were having dinner before the meeting each night that we met. And so we'd gone through as a group. We'd gone through this once. And so we decided as a group we'd go through it again, but we would enlarge the group if anybody else wanted to come. So we had two or three of the guys wives wanted to come. So we opened it up for them. And anybody else who wanted to come. And so we'd started through the book the second time.

Now my wife had seen with her own eyes the changes that occurred to these original group as they went through this process. If you get a chance, ask her about it. She'll have a tendency to tell you the truth, whereas I might sometimes lie a little. I don't intend to. Anyway, she had watched this marvelous change come about in people who live this way of life. And she was sitting in on that second group. And I'll never forget this as long as I live.

In that little group there was about 12 or 13 guys. And I don't remember how many Al-Anons. And she stopped. We were right in the very beginning of the book. She stopped us. And she said, you know, I watched a bunch of guys go through this one other time. Now I'm watching another group go through this. She said, you know, you'd have to be crazy not to try this. You have to think on that a minute. You'd have to be crazy not to try it.

We'd have to be crazy not to concede that there might be a power in this universe greater than us. It has to be crazy not to give in to that idea. That's the best thing that ever happened to me. And when all my defenses are gone and I'm really tired, the argument about is there God, what's a God like? What's my conception? Blah, blah, blah. The argument finally stops. The albat stop. And I'm tired. And I'm going to choose to believe that there is a power greater than myself.

And I'll call that power gone. And that's all I really need to know. That's all I really need to know. Because once I've reached that point, I am really on a threshold. And I'm getting ready to go into something that's going to change my life. And perhaps for the very first time, I'm going to have the opportunity to do what I've always wanted to do, which is, I don't want to be me anymore. And there is a power by which I can be changed. And the power does not have to be me.

By the time I saw all of this, I knew I didn't possess it. That's a bad spot to be. When you know I don't have the power to change. You know you should change, but you can't. If your conscience grinds away at you over the things that you've done and the way you've lived your life, and you want to be better, and you do not have the

power to be any better than what you already are. Fundamentally, that's what our little path is about, is finding a power which will solve our problems and restore us to a way of thinking where we don't have to do what we used to do, which made it necessary to take a drink.

Every aspect of who I am must be part of this physical, mental, emotional, spiritual. All of me. The spiritual experience for me has been a unifying experience. I'm together. I'm not fragmented anymore. I'm together with me and I'm together with you. And that's just kind of the essence of the experience. I'm putting it stronger. I am you, and you are me. That's the experience. Anything past that is a solution. Now, I believe that ego deflation at depth is absolutely necessary, but I don't believe it means we have to beat on anybody.

I didn't need any more beating. I've been beat as far as I can go. I believe that the doctor's opinion gives me the experience of ego deflation at depth like nothing else. When I finally accept that, I now have, consciously accepted the fact that there's one thing in this universe that I can't control. And that's all it takes to smash the ego. I have a friend that got arrested about the same time I did. Alcoholic. And then his questioning, they'd knock him to the floor and he'd get up. And they'd knock him to the floor and he'd get up.

And he said one of the cops, when I was picking him up, whispered to him, kid, just stay down. And he didn't have the power to just stay down. He had to get up. I understand that. I've got to smash that ego. And alcoholism did that. Isn't that a wonderful thing? There's one thing I have no power over. And then I find there's a second one. On page 24 it tells me about the second one. The fact is, the most alcoholics for reasons yet obscure have lost the power of choice and drank.

I don't have the power to keep away from it either. Our so-called willpower becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable. That's another word for powerless. Unable. I do not have the ability at certain times to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force. The memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first critic. The best news you could ever give me means I can quit looking for them.

Why waste all the energy? I'm without defense. The almost certain consequences of followed taking even a glass of beer do not cut into the mind to deter us. Somewhere else you talk about mental blank spots. And I truly believe those of us who've been alcohol-free and sober for a long period of time are in far more danger and we're in danger from the truth, not from lies. I've been here too long and I've heard all the lies and I've used all the lies.

You're going to have to put together a real long package of lies to get me to believe it's okay for me to take a drink. We're both going to have to do a lot of work to have it come at me that way. But about ten years ago I was flying home from some sort of a deal back here. And I fly united because it's a Denver hub. It's easy. And because they treat me right. And this particular night because I fly so much I have a particular status with the airline that's based on numbers.

But I can be upgraded in the first class if they have a seat available. And I used to think that meant that I was special. What it means is that they can't sell the first class seat but they can sell the one I'm sitting in. So they'll move me up front. They've already got my money and put somebody else back here. Sell that seat twice. It's almost as good as some first class. Anyway, I was in fit spiritual condition. I was in fit emotional condition. I was in fit mental condition. I was fit.

I'm headed home after a weekend with loved ones and friends. I've done the job I was supposed to do for God that weekend. And I knew I'd done it because some of you told me that's what I've done. So okay. I love flying because I love flying. I also use the aircraft as a meditation chamber. Very few people are ever seated next to me. And it gives me an opportunity to read the books. I don't have time to read it home. Because the phone's always right.

Anyway, I'm up in first class now. They serve real food up there, you know. No plastic. There's cloths on the tables. It's really in the economy. I wouldn't pay for it, but it's better than in the back. And it's an evening flight. The lights are on. The ambiance of the room was majestic. Can I take a look? I don't even know what it means, but it really sounds good. Everything was just fine. I'm headed home to the family that I love and love me.

Everything's fine. And out of the corner of my eye, I saw the flight attendant for this burgundy red stuff into my seatmate's glass. And it caught my attention. Now, you have to understand, I do not have an alcoholic mind at work here. There's one tucked back in the corner I draw out to use when I need it. But I never use it for myself. It's of no value to me, personally. I don't think alcohol. I don't see alcohol. I'm extremely vulnerable to alcohol because I don't see it.

It's not part of, I don't recognize it. Just automatically, it's not there. Isn't that a wondrous thing? God took that from me. But it makes me vulnerable. So I look over and the lights are hitting it. Oh, pretty. And my mind said, that really looks good. Now that was the truth. There's no lie in that. That burgundy red stuff looks good. Then my mind said, I bet that's really going to taste good, too. That's the truth. Why else would she give it to her?

And then my mind said, I bet that's going to make his whole dinner taste better. That's why the given one, it cleans your palate, it has a function. Now I'm going to taste good, it makes room for the taste that are going to follow it. And suddenly a prayer began in me. I did not begin to pray. I don't know how to describe it for you, but a prayer began in me. And I've learned over the years when that occurs, I retreat inside to my little garden and I sit there and I get still until it's time to come out.

And I realized in this silence, my very next thought would have been, I probably ought to have one of those, and it would not have been lying. So, I needed at the beginning a need today more than ever a power greater than myself that cares and protects for me because I don't even know when I'm in danger. I'm like this going through life, and I want to stay that way. Of all of the benefits that I have been given, I've been returned to innocence.

I don't know how to explain that to you. I've been in the dungeons, but I don't feel like that. I've been returned to innocence. So I'm very vulnerable, I'm not a small child, and I need to watch to over and care for it. It took E-load and flash into depth to get to that place. To be willing to say that is my state. I may have this outward appearance of competence. If you believe that, I've got some land down near Sarasota this life.

There's a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps running from putting his hand on a hot stove. That's me, I don't even have to interpret it, that's just me. And they go through a number of different ways of thinking that are so goofy, I love them. My favorite was, yeah, what's the use that I have? I've already started. In that abute, what kind of defense is it that finally shows up after the fact? I've already had one, might as well go ahead and finish.

Good defense, let me sharpen that sword. When this sort of thinking is fully established in the person with alcoholic tendencies and bills just being cutesy, he's probably placed himself beyond human aid. We're talking about my approach to this from the beginning. You can't keep me sober if this is true. Singly or collectively. If you could, everybody who came here would stay sober. If 90 meetings or 90 days worked, nobody would be drunk again the second time.

Nobody. I'm beyond human aid. Now, contrary to that or strangely enough, God works through you, that's fine. But you individually or collectively can't keep me sober. I can't either. I can't, you can't. We're kind of stuck, aren't we? We got to have a power by which we can live somehow. So I'm beyond human aid and unless locked up, may die or go permanently and save. Well, I've already died, that didn't work. I'm locked up.

That won't work. All locked up means is locked up. I worked in the dishroom in that penitentiary. That's where all the booze went through. I had to negotiate with the guys moving the booze and make a deal. I didn't want to stop him. He couldn't anyway. I just wouldn't want him putting it in our locker's where if the heat came down, it came down on us. And I had to learn how to negotiate with people who were quite willing to kill somebody to get their merchandise moved.

Ain't no big deal. I'm a drug smogger, same group. Different clothes, that's all. You negotiate. But I'm already locked up. And as far as I know at that time, I was already permanently insane. The paper said, sociopath type 2, psychopath, manic depressive drug addict. That's permanently insane. The reason I was in the penitentiary is we had negotiated a plea bargain in my case. The state was wanting to cut me some slack.

Instead of three years to life, they said if you'll plead guilty to a reduced charge, we've been talking to the feds. You're pretty sick. And the feds have agreed if you'll plead guilty, we'll give you one and a half to three and then we'll suspend that and give you to the feds. And they'll take you to Fort Worth, Texas to fix what's wrong with you to that big hospital down there. That's where I was supposed to go. All the power I had, all the power the state government had and all the power the federal government meant that following my accepting those terms within five days I should have been in Fort Worth, Texas.

And I end up in the fish tank in the Colorado State Penitentiary instead. Because by the grace of a loving God and because I had surrendered, I was taken where I needed to go to hear the message I needed to hear and I didn't even know it. The compound power of all of us wasn't enough to pull off the wrong deal. Couldn't have been any better. So I'm already here once left to fight. I'm permanently insane. Associate path and a psychopath are untreatable.

That's why I was in the penitentiary. One doesn't know the difference between right and wrong. So you can't treat them. The other one knows the difference. Just doesn't give a damn. And they're saying I'm both. The guy who made the deal changes his mind. He and I became friends later. He said he told them. There's nothing we can do for this one. Just get him off the street so he didn't hurt anybody else. That's permanent.

And you come along and say, oh, we don't think you're an associate path or a psychopath. We think you're a good actor. Damn, give me some drama, will ya? Let me at least be a little sociopathic. I can show you a psychopath. Back me in a corner. Six of you big guy. I can show you a psychopath. probably insane. And you will be too if you come in a corner. I'll jump. Anyway. But there is a solution. Old Tom O'Sullivan helped us

along the way.

I'm trying to share with you some of the steps of my recovery. They didn't all come through here. They only came through here. He said, if you came here for answers, I'm sorry. We don't have any. We have no answers here. If you need answers, just go out there on the street. Stop any stranger. Tell them what the problem is and they will give you an answer. What we have here is a solution. And if you will immerse yourself in that solution, you'll find your own answers.

Kind of cutesy, but it turns out that way. And what is our solution? Well, almost none of us liked it. That's what it says. Must be a hummer. Self searching. Leveling of pride. Confession of shortcomings, which the process requires. For its successful consummation. Oh, shit. That's a lot of work. And I had just done that. I had taken the most in-depth inventory I have ever taken in my life. And what I found I had to kill.

And now I'm going to be asked to do that again. I'll explain that to you. One from the darkness and one from the light. Leveling of pride. Now I'm going to get philosophical about that. It has to do entirely with what I deserve and don't deserve. I deserve nothing. I have no rights. I gave them all up years ago. My ambition has been taken care of. I don't have any. I mean, I'm an American. I don't want to be when I grow up.

Don't want to. Thank you very much. I've met two adults a long way. They want anything they had to offer. They were too serious. Do you ever meet an adult? They're serious. That's what they say. I'm serious. Confession of shortcomings. That is so namby-pamby. It's just disgusting. Short comings. I'm a high-profile gangster. What do you mean short comings? Okay. Look in my mind and see the madness and you want me to talk about short comings and defects of character.

What a sissy outfit this is. But if that's what you require, okay. And they told me we have a way of doing this, by the way, that works. When we saw that it really worked in others, and I saw that, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we'd been living it, absolutely. Hopeless and futile. Can not do it one more second. When, therefore, we were approached by those in who the problem had been solved.

Ah, did you hear it? The problem has been solved. That puts an end to, oh, well, it's because I'm alcohol. I'm only human. Bullshit. I didn't mean to offend anybody past the second row. When, therefore, we were approached by those in who the problem had been solved. It was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kid of spiritual tools later or feet. The whole business is about spiritual. And the tools I'm going to get are spiritual.

Maybe I'm a spiritual being too. If that's what I'm going to get to use, maybe. I don't know. I began to get some clues that that was the truth. It says in here that I'm one of God's children. Is God spiritual? Then I must be too. The great fact is just this and nothing less. Please don't settle for anything less than this. Our experience, we of Alcoholics Anonymous, this is our great fact. Nothing less than this. We've had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe.

I get in a whole new way of seeing the world. I'm thinking about it. The feeling. It doesn't mean all the old things are gone. In fact, I like some of them. Some of the ways of feeling and thinking are so goofy that when there's nothing good on television, just strap me to my chair and let me run. Right, Elba? Absolutely. Make sure

I'm strapped down tight. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous.

This is a living power. Where I am, God is. All I need to know. The rest will fall in place. That's our experience. He's convinced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves. That's a pretty hefty power. There's some depth in weight for you. Oh, do I want that? But he's a sharp stick in the eye. I would be insane, truly insane. I do not want to try that, right, Jerry? I agree with you. If you're as seriously alcoholic as we were, and I've got to tell you, every time I've talked about alcoholic, I've watched heads going like that.

If you were going like that doing anything, either of us said, don't give up your chair. Because we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. Oh, shit. Here we go again. I'm a middle-of-the-roader. If you're in this land, you've got to duck this way. If you're in this land, you've got to duck that way. If you're in the middle-of-the-road, and they just go right on by you, you don't have to do a thing. Just stand there.

Don't move. Just stand there. They'll duck you. We're in a position where life was becoming impossible. Yeah. And if we'd pass into the region from which there is no return through a human aid, we'd had but two alternatives. One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could. I don't know about you, but I reached a point where alcohol did not blot out the consciousness of the intolerable situation.

And the other was to accept spiritual help. And I have to do that without knowing what the hell I'm talking about. It's an act of faith. I don't believe you can acquire faith. I think it's just something that it's there. The big book shares with me that deep within every human being is the fundamental idea of God, and that's where I'm going to find it. That's where they found it. That's where I will find it. Great reality is deep within.

So I can quit looking out here. Once I find it here, then I can see it out here. But I'm to quit looking for it out here because this is where I'm going to find it. Deep within. Scary propositions. Does that make anybody here nervous? I'm going to get through that first level or two of my mind. That's scary. But I've got to go through there. Because if I don't go through there, I can't get to the other. I've blocked it over.

It says we block it with pomp and worship and other things. I love the pomp because I am one around. I just love being pompous. It's so much better than being arrogant. Arrogant people get to where snooty looks. Pompous people get to wear robes. Fur on the call. And they don't even have to look arrogant. You just know I'm right. I'm willing to admit. I may not always be right. But I'm never wrong. And there are other days.

We have some more pompous people here. Pompous asses on your feet. That will stop me from having a spiritual experience because it insists that I already know what's best. I truly believe I've been on a spiritual search since I was small. I've always known it would be a spiritual answer. The idea that I can be restored to a state where I was saying and sound which means in touch with the spirit is part of this whole process.

My sponsor said it will assume you went insane about two seconds after birth. Well then we don't have to track anything down. Let's just start from the beginning. And the big book goes on to use terrible words like reborn. What a nice thing. The thing is if you're fairly new you need to understand that being born or being

reborn any birth process doesn't feel good. We talk about spiritual awakenings like they felt good.

Haven't had one yet that felt good. Bills didn't feel good. First thing that happened after his big boom was he called a doctor in and says you suppose I'm still sane and sound here? Just doesn't feel right. Because it feels different. And it'll always be that way. But I get tickled at myself because I'm constantly involved in this process of changing and growing and letting the spirit move me where the spirit was. And I get all cozy and comfortable and then wam.

And it feels like wam until I just relax under it. The suggestion was we suggest you forget everything you think you know about anything because nothing has worked so far. Forget spiritually about spiritual matter if you don't have a clue. Let it all go. Let's go back to the beginning. To the freshness. My memory doesn't always work right. I didn't tell you all with my favorite story about that. I know that was two weeks ago.

There is a gorgeous human being in California. His name is Ken Devaney. If you ever get an opportunity to hear him talk please do. His presence just fills the room with love. And his words are great carriers of that message. Anyway, Ken talks about this piece by telling the story of the little three year old girl when her parents bought home the new baby brother. Good kid. They bring the baby into the house and from the very beginning the little girl says can I spend a little time alone with the baby?

And they're not sure what's going on here. They're a little nervous because she's just small. The next few weeks they was supervision. Let her hold the baby and watch how she interacts and she keeps in. Can I just spend a few minutes alone with the baby? And finally they let her go into a room. They put the baby in the crib. Let her in there and shut the door. She dashes over the crib and says quick tell me about God.

I'm beginning to forget. We all know deep within us what this is already about. It's covered over with pomp and worship of other things and fear and things we think have been done to us and the unfairness of life. Oh, I love that one. It just isn't fair. Well, it's not supposed to be. And I covered over with all that. I have rights. That's a pile of mud about that deep. If you're looking for that little golden glow down inside.

My views of God when I'm in that state are very simple. I didn't God that I'm talking to. It's Santa Claus. Gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme. What are you going to do for me today? Well, I'm truly at my best in a self-centered state. All of my prayers are going to be self-centered. It's just the nature of it. I will go so far when I'm being really self-centered as to pray for you. Come on. Tell me that in self-centered.

I'm going to pray that you get everything I want. I'm sorry. That doesn't make any sense to me. I will pray that God has his own way with you. If you ask me to, I'll never make that prayer unless you ask because he answers that one. Gimme, nothing ready for that. So I've got to let go of all my, even my own conceptions of God. He destroyed them for me. What a merciful day. He'd have me tell him something about what I believed about God and then he just wiped without.

I might end up screaming at him. You're asking me to turn my life over to the care of nothing. He said, well, why not? Nothing can run it better than you've been doing it. nail me again. I don't want to get off on a long tangent here because I've got a three hour track we've gone. I'm going to unplug that for now, for now. But someone asked me a short while back, do you believe that God is love? And I had to honestly answer, I certainly

hope not. Because if that all is all God is, it's going to be based on my understanding of love. And that's how I will relate to it. My understanding is so minuscule that it must not be just that. I must also tell you, I believe that's one of the best manifestations I see of the power of God. But it better be more than that. So I'm out of the defining business. Okay, reveal to me. First reveal myself to me, and then reveal what you have in store for me. Then reveal some strength because once I know what you have in store for me, I don't want to do that. So the question is not anymore, what is God? Where is God?

That's what we're coming to. And do I even want to have a relationship? It tells me here I can have a relationship built on easy and understandable terms. Do I want that? Not in myself centered mind because that means he's, if he's really present here, he knows what's going on in here. And I'm cooked. I don't want anybody looking in on that, particularly not God. And these aren't the killer thoughts. This is important gasoline on people and setting them on a fire. This is that chicken shit stuff that was on in my head.

It just makes me ashamed of myself. Do I really want it? The big books suggest, as we, actually, they, they, cream us in here. They haven't saved the prayer before they warn us, oops, before you say this, you might not want to think about it for a while. Okay. We're headed for the third step prayer, obviously. I think we ought to take a break and think about that. Because I believe if you really say that and mean it, you are now on the boat that you can't get off. You can't. You can die. You can drink again, but you can never ever forget the taste of the power of God once it's hit you. And it's a taste. One of the old books described it that way, and they shall hunger and thirst after righteousness. Well, you get a taste of this. You think selling comfort was good? What do you taste of? So my suggestion is that we just consider that and see how far away we can get with that. We'll hopefully say that there's their prayer all together. Then we'll just go into some little technical stuff that we do with inventory, some viewpoints and you all know more about it than we do because you write a lot more inventory than we do. Well, you do. I've talked to a lot of you. A bunch of inventory freaks.

So what do you think? 15 minutes? 20 minutes? How long is it going to take for you to decide that you're hopeless and want to talk to God about it? It's too severe a break. All right. Once again, as we move down this little path toward our own discovery, we ask ourselves again, once I start drinking, do I have control over the amount of drink, or once I decide to stop, can I stay stopped? I doesn't take a real rocket sign that stands at all. The alcoholic mind says, yeah, but yeah, but what? God, we've had a lot of fun when I was up in Rhode Island with these folks in Massachusetts. Yeah, but what? Well, I was always, I had set my expectations too low. I didn't treat myself good enough. I mean, we've had a lot of fun. But let's just take one last little look at this thing called powerlessness. When we drank, did we find that we had little control over the amount that we drank? You know, I said, I saw this thing about the phenomenon of craving that never occurs in the average temperate drinker. I had trouble as simple as thought as that is. I had trouble with that because I thought, well, hell, I've never, I don't, I just don't recall ever having created it. And that's pretty simple because most every time I drank, one hour's ready for the second one I had it. And Christ, I'm, I'm a lover of the happy hour where you get two for one. You got some other folks who know what the happy hour is. Good hockey's in here by God. You know, the best happy hour is when you can get two for one and when you're about halfway through the first one, you get two, you got, you got about halfway through the first one, you're starting to find the waitress to get the next two, aren't you? Yeah, that's what we do.

You think of that as being at all off center, just a little off center? I didn't think so at the time. I read it didn't.

So for many of us, and that's just one little symptom. I talked earlier about the progressive nature of this illness. Over time it gets worse over time, it takes more medication. See, there's a, there's a little deal out there that people used to say to me, Jerry, you've got a problem with alcohol. Jerry, you've got a hell of a problem with this booze. And you know what, I'm 23 plus years sober, and I will tell you today, and it sounds like heresy to some of you, I don't have a problem with alcohol. God Almighty was the best solution I ever found.

It really wasn't. So if you say to me, and I'm on the front end of this deal, and you say to me, Jerry, we need to talk about drinking. That's not what you're saying to me. Or maybe what you think you're saying to me, but what I'm hearing is far or beyond that, what you're going to talk to me about is how am I going to quit? And when? And I'm at a point in my life, in those days where I'm thinking, you can talk to me of anything you want, but not about not drinking. In fact, the matter I reached a point where I was trying to figure out how to, I really did. I went through this exercise for about six months. I was trying to figure out how to not drink, but drink. You got to do something. You got to do something. But 13 years sober, the drinking problem far behind me. Now, I want to be careful how I say that because I'm a fella who clearly understands in my case, I was relieved of the obsession to drink.

That choice, I didn't have a choice to not drink for many years, and I've come pretty clear on the fact that today I don't believe that I have a choice to drink. So the drink choosing thing is not a deal for me. I don't even get to think in those terms. But 13 years sober, I had to finally come to because I became fully acquainted with the seriousness of the progressive nature of the disease, the terrible terror and the fear and the terrible depression and the terrible disconnectedness that goes with the disease of alcoholism when it's left untreated over any period of time.

I got to get clear about that. And so I had to read this little thing here on page 44. It says to be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live life on a spiritual basis and not always easy alternatives to face. And they're not, are they? What we get to do, we get to choose between everything we have ever held dear in our entire life and die, an alcoholic death, or give it all up and go into uncharted waters. That's for me. I want to go do that. I'm a guy who tried to control every feeling I've ever had. This feeling I don't like, so I'd change it this way. This one I don't like, so I jack it over this way. And this one's not good enough, so I jack it up, higher intensity.

You know, I'm jacked with my feelings. And I don't, you know, and so to ask me to give all that up so I can go out here into the unknown, it's not an easy alternative. And often one of the things we do as sponsors is allow the person in the room in the space to make their own choice. You know, most of us are so, I got to be careful. I say this, sometimes we have a tendency to want other people to get this before they're ready to get it. It's like Don talks about helping them across the street, but they don't want to cross the street. It's not an easy alternative.

Sometimes we, one of the things that I think in terms of sponsorship is always to meet them where they are. And then I will stay with them where they are until they're ready to come on down this road if they want to. So, we're faced with an alternative. Am I going to do this or not? I'll tell you a funny little story about the third step. I told this a couple of years ago, and some folks here like it. There's some of you who haven't heard me share this thing about the third step with you. I was, remember I told you I was having difficulty with my inventory and the fourth step. And so, I went over to the standard cover bookstore in Denver, Colorado.

Nice big bookstore has a beautiful self-help section. I'm not anything if I'm not thorough about self-help. I mean, I can talk to you about Scott Peck and Bradshaw and the inner child, and we can just go on and add in tonight. So, I found a book over there, and I thought this is what I need, and sure enough, I thumbed through that, and I got to a page, I think it's page 37, it had my personal Bill of Rights listed. And I thought, holy cow, I did not know I had a personal Bill of Rights. And so, I started down through this personal Bill of Rights, and I got a bunch of our keys here to tell me I got to be rid of my anger. And I see this book and my personal Bill of Rights, it says, considering the way I was treated, I have a right to be angry.

Hell, that's a lot easier than writing a damn inventory, isn't it? So, man, I'm just loving this, and I just, man, I raise home, and I read these over and over, and man, I'm starting to feel better. And if there's anything an out he likes, it's to feel good, and when you feel good, you stop doing everything. But I thought, you know, I bring the magnanimous, I do have a magnanimous spirit, so I call my sponsor, and I said, listen, I don't think I'm going to have to do this inventory stuff that I'm having so much for me, says, why not? I said, well, I've got this nifty book. Now, what I'm thinking about is I'm sharing this with him is, I'm going to raise back when he hears what I've got for him, I'm going to, he's going to like it so well, I can race back bookstore by copy number two and go give it to him. And so, I say, I got, I found this personal bill of rice, I didn't know I had it, and I feel a whole lot better understanding now that I have it. Well, he said, you don't have any rights. And I said, what?

He said, and I can remember it as though it happened really, truly yesterday, it's not just a figure of speech. I can remember that I had a hard time breathing, it felt like somebody, somebody had put a stiletto right into my lung. I just, it just hurt like hell. I thought, what do you mean? I don't have any rights. And he said to me, he said, we gave those up in the third step. Needless to say, the son of a bitch did not get a copy of my book. But listen to the answer again. We gave those up when we took the third step, confrontation with a solution or truth with law, either one. We gave him up, meaning that he had given them up too when I gave them up, just like I gave them up. It's not that I'm out here all by myself. No, he's not sharing with me or suggesting that I do anything that he hasn't done. We gave him up. Perhaps of all the gifts I've ever been given through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and by guidance from the Spirit, nothing has been quite so nifty as the concept that I have no rights. Because out of that, I got very clear that this is a bonus time for me. I do not deserve to be here. I did nothing to deserve to have so variety. I'm not a chosen one. I don't know. I don't know how this happened.

And I probably, I may never know. I don't know. Except that it got terribly beaten. That's as close as I can come to telling you why this has been given to some of us. We get terribly beaten. Can't there's no place left to go? Have no rights. I thought I might share just before we take the third step. I thought, you know, that might be our proposal that we take a look at. What are we doing here? We're going to give up our rights? Well, that's your call. But if I look back on page 42 of this book of ours, there's a little deal that says quite as important was a discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems. What a heck of a deal. Everything I have ever been looking for, I've discovered here in this little way of life that we had, in order to my call just the spiritual path. Everything quite as important was a discovery. The spiritual principles solved all my problems. As I moved on down this deal and I got ready to take that third step, I had great difficulty. I believe, and I don't know if anybody else believes this or not. I believe if I took this third step prayer, see, I get confused on spiritual matters. Just to show you how goofy I am about the term spiritual. I thought if I do this spiritual stuff here, that means I'm going to have to live without a woman and I'm going to have to live in poverty the rest of my life. Well, isn't that

what, you ever think of that? Yeah, you can't be rich and be spiritual. You can't be looking at a good looking woman and be spiritual. That's what I was taught.

I mean, I'm dead in the water. I see pretty girls and I think, God, there goes another one. And I thought I can't do this. But when we reach that point where we are sure that we are beyond human aid, let's say what have we got left to lose? Not a thing. Not a thing. But even with that in mind, I had to take one more look because I saw something in here and I needed it desperately. At the front end of the steps, it says, we stood at the turning point. We ask his care with complete abandon. We stood at the turning point. We ask his care with complete abandon.

The idea of embarking upon a spiritual path was terribly, terribly frightening to me. It was also, there was a certain amount of discomfort. And I did not know then what the discomfort was. I'll tell you today what I believe the discomfort is. I believe that I had already been touched for the spirit, but Tommy got here. And my little old self was so shabby. I couldn't stand me being in touch with anything as pure as a spirit. And that created a certain discomfort. And today I still believe that. I believe if I start down a road of doing something that I should not be doing, that discomfort comes back.

It's called God consciousness, if you want to know what it is. Yeah, we get conscious of the spirit and early on it's uncomfortable. At least so it was for me. But then I lived kind of a shabby little life. You know, you start lying when you're three and a half. That's not the best way to get into heaven. We stood at the turning point. We asked his protection and care with complete abandon. But I did get a deep understanding. And again, we talk about this not being a technical thing.

It's an experiential thing. And I had by Thomas 13 years sober experience this simple little fact. I am an alcoholic. I know that. I know that. I've also known my whole life that I am beyond human aid. I've always known that. I've had people just say to me and they mean it. They've delivered it with all the love in the world. I say, Jerry, what in the world is wrong with you? Just tell me. And you try to explain it to them and they say, God Almighty, can you come up with something better than that? And you've just given them your number a one explanation. I'm on some kind of a different frequency than they are. But I can take any one of you out here with 24 hours sobriety. And if I talk to you about if I'm talking about the guys now and the girls, you probably have your own situation. But if I tell a guy, I understand what it's like to be afraid to ask a girl to dance. Remember what that's like? Terror, isn't it? Terror. They're standing over there. I'm standing over here. That's 20 miles over there. And I know what they're going to say when I get there. If you're a real alcoholic, you'll say this simple thing, Jerry. I understand.

And I don't know what you do. If you're not an alcoholic, you'll say things like, oh, that's silly. Silly it may be, but it's my reality. It's my reality. So I am beyond human aid. And by the time I got to the third part of that little deal, it was so very simple and clear. God can and will, if I seek him, doesn't say God can and will, if I find him. See, there's no caveat there. If I just seek, just seek. And today I've been doing this for a while. I'm still just seeking.

Just a seeker. Just a seeker. And I'm beginning, I will tell you, give you just a little hint. I am beginning to see God in more and more and more things all the time. Don't want to miss any part of this experience that we're having. So that's the deal from that standpoint. So I'm asking God's protection and care with complete abandon.

Know what the deal is and why I need to do this. And the truth of the matter is we're never clear about why we need to do this and the sense that we'd like to be in retrospect. By the way, that's a nice little thing I'll share with you real quick and we'll get on the third step here. We may sound up here as though we know precisely what's happening, when it's happening. That's bullshit. God, I'm glad he used that word because I love to use that. But when he was being so nice, I couldn't. I know three to six months later what was going on now. All that's what was happening. And it's always so enlightening to see that occur. Like I say, when I got one, I, when I, when I had my personal rights taken away from me or learned that I'd given him up, that was a painful, painful problem. I mean, I cannot describe to you the pain that was associated with that day. And yet, it was the greatest gift that I've ever had, greatest gift that I've ever had. And most of my spiritual gifts have come just that way. I did not know what I was receiving when I got it. And it was a terrible experience.

Well, did you ever have any idea that when you were alcoholic, you could do something like this and recover from it totally and completely and wake up in the morning and the sun was great? You know, I've awakened before when the sun was shining. It was a beautiful day. This kind of scenery around us. God, this sucks. Today, my days, a lot of days, I don't, I don't always see things still as clearly as a sane person. I'll call a Don once in a while. And I love to call him on nights when he's taking care of the grandkids. And, and Jackie's been working three 12-hour shifts. And so she's tired. And the grandkids are screaming and crying and hollering. And I can hear things going on over there. And I start laughing. I think somebody else's life is as messed up as mine. Cry at the wrong time and laugh at the wrong time, don't we? God, I offer myself to thee to build with me and do with me as I will. Isn't that a beautiful deal? I was trying to do this prayer one time and I was getting ready to do it in all sincerity. And I said to a dear friend of mine, I said, you know, I look at this prayer. God, I offer to thee to build with me and do with me as I will. I said, you know what? I don't have anything to offer. I haven't got anything to offer to God. And the guy was one of the most spiritually guided fellows I've ever known. And he said to me in a heartbeat, he said, that's what God wants to start with is nothing. And our dear friend, who's no longer with us now, and I can use his name and not worry about anonymity or violation of anonymity or Bob White out of Lake Whitney, Texas, used to say many of us have to be reduced to nothing before we get called into God's service. Same thought. God, I offer myself to build with me and do with me as I will. Release me of the bondage itself that I may better do thy will.

Take away my difficulties that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help. Listen to that. To those I would help. This deal isn't even for us, is it? God, I want this to be for me. I ain't going to go through this stuff without something in it for me. God, if I do this will you give me a girl and some money. If you do, I'll be all right. That brings up another story, and I will not go down this road at this time. Believe me, the bondage of self that I may better do thy will. Take away my difficulties of victory over them may bear witness to those I would help if I love that power and I will have life. May I do thy will always. No way am in there.

The beauty of this deal is that there is so much power in taking this prayer together. I have seen it over and over and over, and many of you have allowed me the great honor of doing this with you, and it has brought a richness to my life, and you do me great honor to allow me to even consider doing this with you again, and I would love to do it as a group. How do you all feel about that? Oh, Matthew, the pope of Cincinnati just came in. Stand up, Matthew.

You know, that's one of the glories of living this way of life. We have history with people from all over, and I

show up at the damndest places in the damndest time. The prayer process begins with the invocation, which simply means the acknowledgement of the presence of God, and that's done by calling him by name. We're establishing a relationship on easy and understandable terms. If I want Jerry, I'll call Jerry one Brian. I'll call Brian because I can expect an answer. Mars is no different.

Our prayer process here begins with the invocation. I'm invoking the presence of God. He's here anyway. I'm just by saying it, I acknowledge that. Amen in spiritual terms is the closure of that prayer process, so be it is what that means. What we just did is so. It's an acknowledgement that since God said he'd be here and do that, it's done. I've been going over this for a long time, and I do not find an amen at the end of the third step prayer. The first one I can find comes at the end of what we call the seventh step prayer, which is nothing but the third step prayer with teeth in it. So I have concluded my view is it from the word God to the amen at the end of the seventh step is all part of the same prayer. Prayer now becomes action and activity.

It takes me out of being, gimme, gimme, gimme, because this process is about let me give, let me give, let me get. I offer myself to thee. Don't come to me, I'm coming to you. My sponsor is, I told you, destroyed all my conceptions of God and left me with nothing except one last reservation, and he went for it. Truth without love is cruelty and confrontation without a real answer is brutality, so I won't do that. But he loved me and he had a real answer so he didn't pussyfoot.

He probed until I told him what my genuine concern was, but if I gave my life entirely over to God, he had a job for me and I really didn't want it because I knew what it was already. I would end up at the corner of Colfax and Broadway and Denver handing out watch-time magazines and asking strangers, have you been saved brother? Listen, I had this plus apartment in Selby 49 right in this penitentiary. I'm giving that up for that. I had a reference. I'm never afraid of the unknown ever. I love the unknown. That's where the excitement is. What I'm afraid of is what I think is going to happen. What I'm making up in my head. And I had a reference for that because as I grew up in Denver, there was an old guy. God, I'm one of them now. An old guy. Brown person. It's still in that corner. Brown shoes. Brown pants. Brown suit. Brown tie. Brown hat. Brown attitude.

Have you been saved brother? And we drive by and make funny. And that's what I was really afraid of. Even for God, I will not be put in a position where you can make fun of me. Don't worry about do I have an ego problem. Yes I do. Five and a half months before this, I'm dead. But I ain't going to stand on no quarters. I had a very wise sponsor. He said, Oh, well, let's talk about that. Now you folks are fairly new when the sponsor says, let's talk about that. Please understand it does not mean let us talk about anything.

The party's over. I love you. He said to me as he looked me directly in the eyes, down to you suppose that the guy that's handing out watchtowers down there today had breakfast where he wanted to. And I said, yeah, probably. He said, well, you didn't do you suppose that when he finishes making a fool himself down there today. No, do you suppose that he's wearing clothes and he picked out to do that job in. I said, probably. He said, well, you're not. And he said, do you suppose that when he's all through making a fool himself, that he gets to go home. And of course I didn't. Now what he did for me was crack the wall, open my mind and escort me, hand carry me into my new mind and laid the foundation, which is simple. It's implicit in the prayer we're going to talk about.

Anything at all that God has in mind for me is better than anything at all that I will ever have in mind for me, period. That's it. And I've been living that way for 32 years. And I'm reluctant sometimes. I didn't know you could be there. You I've called God a bully one afternoon, lighting up, thought I who the bully was, went in with me. Anything at all that he has in mind for me is better than anything at all that I will ever have in mind for me. My very best thinking takes me to a point where I must kill whoever I am because I can't stand being that anymore.

Best I can do. Good place to start from. That's where my third step starts from. There is an implicit awakening in that. If you heard me, you suddenly somebody woke up. I heard somebody wake up. I got crack a thunder. My relationship is based upon that. The whole program is based upon that from here on. Before I get up in the morning, I ask him what he wants me to do today. And I'll lay there until I have to pee waiting for an answer. And if I don't get an answer by then, I figured that's what he wants me to do next. Life is very simple. Then you ask him again, is this all you had in mind? No. Brush your teeth. Get a job. Good work. Blah blah blah.

Whatever he has in mind is better than what I have in mind. At my very, very best, if there's 10 people in the room, nine can get some good out of it. Somebody's going to get screwed. It's just the nature of me. When God's in charge, everybody in the room benefits. Everybody looking into the room benefits. Anybody hears about what happened in the room benefits? There are no losers. So he was able to blend the desperation of needing to find an answer with the answer. Whatever is better than whatever. Well, my ego is such that I went back and contemplated that. He said, now go think about that before we say this prayer. And I decided I'm willing to go now. I'm ready to go to corner and call facts about him. I'm not watching watchtowers.

I am. I went back and told him that. He laughed at me. He said, that's really noble of you. But he's already got a guy down there doing that. He's probably got something else in mind for you. It made it very clear I was to not ask what that might be. There's no consequence. Whatever it is, is going to be fine. If you believe me, we can go on and say that prayer. Whatever it is, is going to be just fine. And if you end up in Zimbabwe, showing people how to take sweet potatoes out of the ground, give thanks to God. You ain't on a Jersey flats drunk.

Whatever he has in mind. Now, if you believe that, we can say it's their prayer. If you don't believe that, we're going to say it anyway. But you don't have to join in. In fact, I suggest that you don't join in. If you don't believe that, never join in with real believers. If you don't believe, it'll happen to you anyway. And you just get a piss you off. Jerry and I are going to say the thirst to prayer. And we would invite you all if you wish to join us. And then we can really get bring it and show you the stuff. I truly don't think it makes any difference what position we come to God in. But it matters to each of us. So how do you want to do it? You want to just sit? We've got a big group. You want to kneel? You want to go through the fall or all of a big circle? What would you like to do? I'm going to suggest we just sit still.

It's all in here anyway. Did you find that pleasant? That has been my general experience with any time that I'm visiting with God. It's a very pleasant deal. One of the people's experience is, but I like that better than the booms. Anybody want to share anything before we move on? There's a microphone there in the center and there's a couple of them right here. For how many of you was that the first time that you joined with a group in this prayer?

Okay. Good. That was always one of the underlying fears. I'll do it in my closet privately, but not I've got an eagle. I'm so ashamed of praying in public. Somebody might think I'm praying in public. During this period, because the alcoholic mind is one that interprets and extrapolates and figures out, I use what is known as what I call a checklist method through this next part of the prayer, which is the self-examination.

So let's check ourselves and see if we are here at this point. All through here at times when there's been a spiritual event or if we've done it right, it should have been. They describe a number of things so we know we're not clear off base. No one paid 63 at the end of the prayer. He says, we found it very desirable to take this spiritual step with an understanding person. Well, we've done that. We've met that qualification.

I believe there's at least one understanding person in the room. The book suggests perhaps the wife, best friend, or spiritual advisor. We've met that. My wife's here, best friend's here. I have several spiritual advisors in the room. They're being quiet at the moment, but they'll get me. But it's better to meet God alone with one who might misunderstand. The wording was, of course, quite optional, so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. We met that. We voiced it. And I think we are the funniest people in the world. As long as the wording is optional, I will say it with the these and the vowels. If I gotta say it with the these and the vowels, I ain't gonna do it. Just nature of the bees. You may not know, but it's going to be a you instead of the I'm just not going to comply.

We had one fellow in the workshop we were doing in North Carolina. When we came to this, he said, this is for me, this is too private. And I would prefer not to join with the group. And so he just stood outside of the group. It didn't make any difference in the energy. It didn't separate him from anybody. The power of this prayer is so strong, and the unifying spirit is so strong. It really didn't matter. And we just went ahead on. And if you feel that way, good. Nothing wrong with that. This was only a beginning. Wait a minute. Now we're tampering with my illusions again. I thought a personal experience with God was the end of the road.

And now you're telling me it's only the beginning. Yeah, this is just the beginning. Though honesty and humbly made an effect, sometimes a very great one was felt at once. I felt a great effect. Peace. Pleasantness. Never thought that was a good effect. It always had to do. Did y'all have any effect? Sometimes it was a great one. Was it enough of an effect you'd like to go on and tackle the work, which by the way, I don't like to like that. We unfortunately have created a group of monsters. He and I, not a you, who got everybody doing the work, meaning the steps. The steps are not to work. The steps are the preparation for the work. The work of alcohol.