

Big Book Weekend

2003 | Part 3 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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This is weren't good so they got new mattresses each of them and in a maximum security 24 hour day surveillance penitentiary. This is resourceful as hell. Just thinking about boggles my mind. These guys are really good. They call it their little weekend vacation to Bermuda or the Bahamas or whatever they're saying. This is resourceful. These are guys who are not stupid. Shyboy gets out in 90 days. And he's gotten very honest. He's been going through this process. He said, I'm terrified. I've been here 17 years. All I know how to do is drink, sell, nope, and do time. And I'm terrified. But I remember that. I don't know how to live. And if you can bring that to this, it's wonderful because now I'm really willing to learn something.

So anyway, I believe the power of God went to work. The suggestion here isn't that I believe so much that I believe in God, it was that I believe in the power of God, which makes me an observer to life. I want to see demonstrations of this power. Don't just talk to me. I'm going to watch you for a while. People watch us. We can sound real good at the podium. People watch us. How do they really live? And I'm watching it. I didn't see much in the jail that interested me.

And I'd begun to heal up, which is a very dangerous thing for an alcoholic to do. I needed. I can go from death to pretty good operation in about three days. Anyway, they took me in a room with my attorney the day of my trial. And the district attorney and he and I had a little discussion. He said, we've been talking to the federal people because I owed them five years. They were part of my life. He said, the feds and I have agreed. We think you're really sick. Okay. Not a fancy. I know that. So what's new?

He said, we really don't want to have this big trial. It's going to be a messy one. If you'll plead guilty to a reduced charge, what we'll do with the deal is we'll give you one and a half to three year sentence. So spend that and turn you back over to the feds and they've agreed to take you to Fort Worth, Texas to the federal hospital and fix what's wrong with you. I signed the papers right there. I'm not stupid. Two of me made that decision. I was wanting to go anywhere anyone said. I also had healed up enough to know that if you put me in a hospital with doctors and books, I'll be on the street in six months.

Because they'll tell me what's wrong with me. They'll tell me about how long it's going to take to fix that and then they'll give me all the symptoms I have to show to prove them getting better. And that's my very best game. I can play that one on my hands and knees. Well, I signed the papers. They kept the deal. They took me into court and the judge changed my age to 17 so I could qualify for it. I'm the only one in Colorado that's been convicted of this crime for 25 or 30 years. It just lays there on the books.

Give me one and a half to three. Turn me over to the feds and if you know about power, you know in five days I should have been in Fort Worth, Texas. Five days later, I'm in the fish tank in the Colorado state country. Because the federal man had checked with the hospital and the hospital said there's nothing we can do for this one anyway. Just get him off the street. So I went down to Canyon City and I don't believe that God will interrupt anyone else's life to make mine better.

But God uses whatever's at hand. And what he had in hand, because I had surrendered totally, was my solution. I didn't know I was alcoholic. I would not have come looking for a. I went to Ann Ann, the federal penitentiary one meeting, didn't hear a thing I identified with because I'm not a drug addict. Just looked like that. Didn't hear a thing. So I was taken where you could come and find me. Alcoholics Anonymous did not get me sober. God got me sober.

Then brought me to Alcoholics Anonymous because just plain sobriety is not adequate. Brought me here so I could learn how as an alcoholic, how to become useful and purposeful and live a life that would really mean something. Everybody I have ever talked to ever, at the bottom of their heart, just wants your life to mean something, somewhere along the way. And that's what we tap here. The great promise of Alcoholics Anonymous is that you can become useful.

No matter how far down the scale you've gone, you can be useful. One of my favorite stories is from old Jack Brennan. He's long dead. Jack was a wheelman for the New York mob. He got fired. Well, Jack drank too much. And he'd be in a blackout and they'd go rob some things. And he'd call me the next morning and say, did we have fun last night? The voice says, you make us really nervous, Jack. You're a good driver, but goodbye.

And in his drinking he was a violent man. His wife called the cops one time. There were six of them, drug him out of his apartment and took him to jail. And he developed a free-flowing resentment for the New York Police Department. And every time he drank he would find six of them and see how many of them he could whip. So by the time he got to AA, Jack only had one eye left. He taught funny because his mouth had been beat up and he'd shoot his tongue so bad he couldn't hardly talk.

He was in a tenement downtown New York, actually an empty building. And God's got a sense of humor. Jack is an Irish Catholic drunk. And he sent a little Jewish fellow out to pick him up. A twelve-step call. A gentle, sweet little Jewish fellow who became his sponsor. And Jack said at the time he couldn't use utensils, he couldn't tie his own shoes. And he really was a mess. And he'd been around AA for about six months and his sponsor kept telling him, you're really important Jack, we need you here.

You're really important. And he said six months he was tying his shoes in the meeting room, the old sobriety and beyond group. And he made him angry so he went and complained about it, which I hardly recommend. If you do something your sponsor tells you and you don't get the results you think you ought to get, go bitch about it. It's wonderful. How do you, how could I be important? He said, oh Jack, you have no idea how important you've been to this group.

When new people come here, we sit them next to you and we tell them, you keep drinking, that's what you're going to be like. This is absolute truth. Everyone is as important as everyone. And sometimes my only purpose in life is to simply be in the room. Because if I am in the room, the person who thinks they're alone can't think that. It makes a lie out of it. There's somebody else here. And other days I'm to climb to the mountaintop.

And I don't want to be up there. But that's the job I get assigned today. Everybody here is useful. You're so important, so important. Somebody can hear you that can't hear me. But it's mainly, we're just here together. It was in the heart of Heart Mountains in Germany. We're a band of robbers together. That's what it's about. No more complicated than that really. Anyway, I was taken where I had the opportunity to hear what you had to say.

I truly believe I was already spiritually awake when I got here. Or I wouldn't have heard it. I believe anybody here today is already awakened spiritually. Or you wouldn't be here. You'd be doing something else. It may not know what to do with it, but we're awake. Isn't that lovely? And Smith gave us a guide for that. Bill stole it and put it in the big book. Dr. Bob's wife. We must walk day by day with a new person.

We're going to wake them up. We're responsible if we wake them up to walk with them until they learn how to walk this way. This is a very scary way of life. If you're self-centered and you suddenly stop being self-centered. I don't know what to do here. I'm going to bungle this job. My first inclination always after I woke up and what people I work with is to save the world. I feel that much power. I can do that. You've got to hold them back.

Just give them a little part of the world to work on for a while. A home group. Let them have the new people as long as they want to use it around to make sure they don't hurt them too bad. But I was taken down there and my cellmate Jim, as we were, fish tank is at that time. It was a four-week orientation where you're isolated from the rest of the community. While I thump in, bump in, test you and decide whether they're going to put you to work and teach you how to live in the community you're about to get into.

Because if you don't learn that real quick, you may not live through the deal. You've got to know there's protocols in whatever community you live in. And this one has serious consequences. And all that's going on. Well, in the third week, I can still hear it. The guard said, you people will come down and you will listen. No clue what's going on. Social calendar was not full, so Jim and I went on down. And I did the most important thing I've ever done in my life.

Listen, there were three of them in prison uniforms with numbers on their chest. Now, I love drama. While it doesn't define alcoholism, I love drama. So let me throw some drama in. My state of being at that time was a willingness to do anything and listen to anything. But also, I was fully aware now because I'm conscious. I'm almost 12 and a half months over. On my own efforts, I have reduced myself to a number. I had no longer qualified as a human being.

I didn't have a name, I'm a number. I was 38, 984, and I was living in a cage with another number who was unfit for human consumption. And this was just something we knew. No guilt trip, no heavy duty deal. I was in the right place and I knew I was right where I was supposed to be. And these three guys came in, ugly little men. Except for Bruce. Bruce was really kind of cute. He really was. Tall, handsome young man just filled with himself.

But Doc was ugly, nasty looking little man. Look like a convict. My name is Doc. He says, I'm an alcoholic. And that means that I'm powerless over alcohol and guards and drugs and all of the other circumstances of my life. And my life has become unmanageable. And if any of you smart bastards think you can still manage your life, look at the reward of state. I just gave you for the nifty job you've been doing. Your very best thinking got you the penitentiary, you're not doing too good, are you?

I believe that truth without love is cruelty. And confrontation without a real answer is brutality. But they loved us and they had a real message so they could use the truth. Because the truth will set you free. It will piss you off first but it will set you free. And they followed it up. That would be brutality if they hadn't followed it up.

And Doc followed it up with us. He says, we can show you a new way of thinking.

We can show you how to learn to live a way of life that will make sense to you. And I've got my first new idea. I've been trying to live my life so it made sense to you. My life never made sense to anybody. Today my life's sake makes sense to me and it still doesn't make sense to a whole lot of people. But I much don't care. When you put bread on my table then you can tell me how to live my life. It doesn't make sense to a lot of people because I live in absolute reliance upon guidance and direction from God.

I know I'm going to get it. I also know I'm not always going to follow it. And I know what the consequences of what that will be and it will be severe enough to bring me back in line but not severe enough to kill me. There's a price to pay for everything. Freedom has a price. A big price. If you want to be free you have to give up whatever it is you want. Then you're free. Whatever it is you're attached to. When I needed a house, a home, I got a chicken coop.

When I desperately wanted to be a family man in a home, I got an 8 by 10 cage. My children lived with a deputy sheriff from the Denver Sheriff's Office instead of with me. Since I just don't care anymore, I've been living in the same house with the same woman for 26 years. And I'm a great grandfather. I am a great grandfather but I'm also a great grandfather. Oh, I'm a wonderful grandfather. I know what the role is. Beautiful.

One of you guys talked about magic. I do magic. In fact, my granddaughter Gianna is learning magic. She thinks that's great. You know how you do that? You take a quarter and it's gone. And then all of a sudden it's behind their ear. How'd you do that grandpa? And you do it over and over and over until they catch you at it. And then if you're like me, you've already got a second way to do it. And when they think they caught you at it, that didn't where it is at all.

Magic is about misdirection. And I believe in magic, because it's fun. One of the funniest acts I have ever seen was a magician that screwed up everything he did. Didn't get a single one, I'm right. Anyway, they went through a number of things that were just meant to plant some seeds. If we wanted what they had, they invited us to come to their 12-step study school on Saturday. I hadn't been invited anywhere for a long time.

Jim and I talked, now understand Jim and I had an interesting relationship. Before cell mates, I wanted a half to three for a crime I had committed. Jim was doing a three to five for a crime he couldn't remember. In a blackout, driving a car, he'd killed some people. He was not a criminal in the same sense of the word I was. And he didn't know why he was there. No matter what they told him, he didn't know. He'd done what I'd always been terrified of.

Maybe killed somebody. So I had a feel for Jim. I didn't know until much later what it was. I was experiencing compassion. I didn't even know it. Most of us wouldn't know the good things if they hit us in the face. Until later, somebody has to describe what that is. There was an empathy there. I was actually identifying with another human being. That's what our whole basis of our program is to get an identification first until that happens where little else can be done.

So the identification can't be in drama. Bruce became one of my early sponsors. He was doing a natural life sentence for a double murder he'd committed one morning in the middle of an alcoholic rage and a stick up. I've

never done anything like that. I'm a sissy bandit. I like to work with paper and with this thing. Even today I still do the same thing. I was in Virginia last weekend. The young fellow showed up with great blue suits and gold everywhere.

And this gorge is quite derby. It's now in my house. He was wearing my hat. And all I had to do was give him enough time to become aware of that. He gave me the hat. Some things don't change. We've made a deal. He is a black black. And he came over Sunday morning with a white hat for me wearing a white suit covered with gold and a black hat. So we made a deal. See we're playing together. I'm learning how to play with you.

I said here's the deal because his little black girlfriend was there. I said next time I come in I will wear a black suit and the white derby with a little feather in it. And you wear this white outfit with the black hat. And we'll walk down Madison Street with me between the two of you that will make an Oreo sandwich. You cracked it? He's in the midst of God's work. They're trying to get a club started in the worst part of Richmond, Virginia.

Where black and white don't matter. Where alcoholics help each other. It's a mission and they're really working hard on this. And their bravery just tickled me to death. They're being very brave because they're meeting resistance everywhere. And it just doesn't bother a bit. They just want to know how do we get past this one. How do we do this? So every time I wear that hat I will tell that story so that you will understand this is about working with each other and making play out of it while we do it.

This is way too serious to get serious about. It's only life or death, lighten up. But when I started the journey I was just a number in a cage. Right where I was supposed to be. And they invited us to the 12 step study school and since it was the only invitation I had that's where I went. When life gets real simple that's how it works. What should I do today? What's in front of you? What are your options? What's job should I take?

The first one that will pay you? But it isn't enough, of course not. I know clearly when I sponsor you that you are destined to be the CEO of General Motors. But you might want to learn to work before you get there. So just get a job. That's what Bruce said. He gave me two things that you'll enjoy. He said are you tired of getting busted? I said yeah, he said we want to quit going where there's cops. That's very simple.

We discussed where they show up. And if I avoid those places they probably won't bother me. And it's true they haven't for quite a while. He said you want money? I said yeah, I said well I'm good at job. And once you get it show up for it on time. While you're there you might even want to consider doing some work. And if you'll do all of that at the end of a particular period of time they'll give you money. And it'll never be enough.

But it'll always be enough. Thank God for that kind of simplicity because I was burned to a crisp. I thought I had to do this intellectually and do it right and be precise. I don't ever make it. But they were very precise. What they invited us to is a 12 step study school. We were not allowed to be members of Alcoholics Anonymous and go to the real meeting on Friday night until we completed a five week intensive walk through the book Alcoholics Anonymous.

Every Saturday and every Sunday afternoon we gave up our yard privileges and our movies for that five weeks. And spent three to four hours Saturday and Sunday up in this school. And the first thing they said when we got there was you new guys for the next five weeks have nothing to say. If you knew anything at all you

wouldn't be here. Okay. We all work in the district. New people need to talk a lot. You know. I didn't want to hear that crap.

They would talk to us after the school. And we would talk to each other down there in the district. But we were not allowed to talk. We were supposed to listen. And they just read this book to us. Kind of do what I'm doing here. Sharing their experience of it with it. Showing us where to find it. Guiding us slowly through. Because this is a process of awakening. Becoming conscious. Of getting rid of things. This is not a process of acquiring anything.

For me it's been a process of getting rid of things. The more I get rid of. The more I understand I already have everything I need. And most of what I want. I'm in a terrible time right now. I can't give things away fast enough to clear out my office. We've been working out of my life and we finally get rid of all of our kids. We tried throwing them out and that didn't work. We tried letting them move out on their own.

That didn't work. They kept moving back. We finally got them married off. Our oldest daughter just found a rich nice guy. I love him. Oh yeah. She not only moved, she took most of her stuff with her. Which is a good sign. She doesn't plan to come back. So we got to finish our basement. Now they can't come back. I was taught first about what is alcoholism. I truly believe my main job as a member of Alcoholics in Ottawa, particularly with newer people, is to help you find out do you have this.

The only way I can do that is to share my stories and their stories. There's a lot of stories that hear this whole first part of this book of stories about Alcoholics and how they discovered they were. This is for the new people, man. I'm going to give you some good news here over on it. In the doctor's opinion, in the second, third and fourth edition, it's on Roman normal page 28. In the first edition, it's page one.

I don't know why we changed it, but we did. Doc Silkworth was talking about Alcoholics. And on the bottom of that page, he has described the different kinds of Alcoholics. Personality types. Alcoholism has some symptoms, but there's different personalities. He said all these and many others have one symptom in common. They cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy, which differentiates these people and sets them apart as a distinct entity.

I've always thought I'm different. I said to Bruce, I feel different. He said that's because you're different. Here's how I'm different. I am set apart. I'm different than my mother in a very real way, but I'm not alone in that difference because you're different the same way. What happens to you after the first drink? Yeah. Pretty intense. Intense enough that you do? That's pretty intense. Me too. I lose count after one.

I drink until I don't need to drink anymore, which may be weeks. It may be overnight. So after the first drink, what happens to me is the same thing that happens to you. The second drink. That's Alcoholism. What happens to me after the first drink is the second drink. I don't have any choice in that matter. And it may not occur this afternoon, but it will occur in a very short period of time and following that will become, well Bill calls us all spray drinkers.

I will drink until that condition is no longer present. And I'll stop for a while and wonder, what the hell

happened? I'm never going to do that again. And I'll lock on all the drama. So I don't do that again, but I go have another drink. And then somebody will say to me, don't you see what you're doing to yourself? Yeah. How do I not do that? Don't you see what you're doing to your family? Oh yeah. That hurts about a better drink.

An allergy is worth thinking about. If I were allergic to tomatoes for instance, and I ate tomatoes, I'd break out with an itch. It's a definable symptom. If this is true and it's like an allergy, when I take a drink, what happens? Well I break out in an itch for another drink. It's describable. If I have this, it only happens to alcoholics. And we're going to be different than anybody else. So whatever treatments available for other people that may also have emotional problems, because that goes along with alcoholism, probably won't work for me.

Nineteen years old in therapy, they used a very valid technique to help me get over my anger toward my dad. I had one of those mixed things. I loved my dad dearly and I hoped he'd die on his trips and never come home. It's just very confusing. What we did was put up a punching bag and then picked your dad's face there and then punched it. It's supposed to help me express my anger. I got involved in it. I really like this.

Express hell. This gives me, that won't work for me. Standard measures won't work for me. If they had psychiatry and church and all of that would have worked for me. But we never addressed my problem. Do you feel kind of set apart once in a while? Yeah. I'm talking to him because I found him walking on the street in Camden. Literally. There he was. And Brian seemed to know him. Brian's a very astute man. He stopped him.

Very compassionate. Okay. I'll get you later. Well, the reason you feel different is because you're different. And I'm going to give you some really good news here. It has never been by any treatment with which we are familiar. Primarily eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence. If you have this disease, the best news I have for you is you are doomed. And that's really good news. There's no treatment for this.

Don't waste your time. The only solution to this problem is the consciousness and the presence of God. A spiritual answer. The only thing we found that works. And however you conceive that. So, isn't that good news? No. Because I'm either mad at God, don't believe her God, or are terrified of God. I've got all these images as to what God is. The stand in the way of my ever having a relationship. How many of you along the way have picked up if you thought it, you've already done it?

And about the time they told me that was about the time I was thinking. It's already too late. My spirit knows about love. Deep within every man, woman, and child is the fundamental idea of God. And the stuff I'm hearing, whether they're teaching it to me or not, what I'm hearing is He's going to kick your ass one these days. And why? Because of who you are. That's the message that I got, not what it was being put out.

I am by nature this way. And this is the way that the world says you're going to be punished forever more. Well, screw it. Why bother? I can't. How could I have a relationship with something I'm afraid of or can't trust? And we face all that when we come to hearing. And my sponsors are very simple with that, very clear with that. He asked me one day, describe to me God as you understand Him. And I started talking about Santa Claus.

Because that was kind of my, you know, what's it going to do for me? My real attitude when we got down to it was God created the heaven and the earth in six days and on the seventh he rested. As far as I was concerned, he was still resting. My basic conception is that God is out here somewhere unreachable by me. Judgmental,

unknowable. But I was going through a new experience because what I came here for, as I said, wasn't sobriety.

I came here to be changed. And here's Bruce, a man who had killed some people in a shootout on the street in a violent alcoholic rage. I couldn't identify with it, but he talked about the morning he did that. He said I woke up that morning and he was 17 years old. Feeling that nobody cared whether I lived or died. A complete failure. And the pain of that was the great instead of started drinking to kill the pain because it always had before.

But this morning it didn't kill the pain. It intensified the pain. And that kind of pain is also called rage. There is no honest response to being outcast beyond rage. My spirit knows I'm as good as you are and as bad as I am. I'm as good as you are as bad as I am. I belong here. So I'm outraged. And in that rage, she said screw it. I'm just going to go get mine and went down to Robert's Hillary store. And in the middle of that, the police would call and shoot out.

He killed some people on the street. The man telling me the story was not capable of committing the act. And I knew that. I've been watching him. People who watch this, I've been watching him. I came here a complete cynic. I am now a healthy skeptic. Oh yeah, I'll believe anything you tell me. What I believe is that you really believe that in whatever world you're living in. And that's fine with me. Roy Nichols, one of the other guys, was a stick up man.

I like to take a gun and go rob places. And he didn't do it for the money either. He liked to rob supermarkets because there were two adrenaline rushes. I mean, in a bank, you hit one teller in your scoot. He's going down line by line by line. Everyone up puts him at greater and greater risk. And he liked the charge. What he really liked was the look on your face when he put a gun to your head. That's what he really liked.

The man telling me the story was incapable of committing that act. And I could see it. That's why I think I was already awake. I could see it. Phil Gateris, who is to this day in my heart one of my heroes. Phil came from Guam. Phil looked like a Chinese pirate captain. Yeah. And when he smiled, it was terrifying. And Phil smiled a lot. Phil was in the penitentiary because when he was 17, they kicked him off of Guam because he was too violent.

When Phil drank, he got really violent. He sent him to family in Denver several years later. They wanted to send him back to Guam and Guam wouldn't take him, so they put him in the penitentiary because on his last drunk, he threw some people out of a three-story window. Kind of fellas Phil was. He came to me one day. He said, I just realized something. I've been in this penitentiary for seven years and you're the first person I've ever sponsored.

You will stay sober. And I lived up on the fourth tier. Of course, whatever Phil wants Phil gets. Phil Gateris was the softest, kindest, most loving human being I have yet to meet. Taught me how to touch physically in a penitentiary. And no one ever questioned it with Phil. Somehow even the worst of the worst understood what Phil was doing. We need touch. The great master knew that. It's something that we do intuitively here.

He'd be walking along the road and come on some guy who was sitting by the side of the road all crippled up and blind and was running the sores. And the guy thought that he was alone because he had running the sores and was blind and crippled. The master knew that he had those because he thought he was alone. And so the first

thing he did, the way I read it, is he touched it. And said, anybody home? That simple touch makes a lie out of, I'm alone.

Whether you like it or not, it doesn't matter. It's now a lie. There is something else here. And what do we do when they come here? We shake their hand. We pat them on the shoulder. We touch them. We move them around so they're not alone anymore. We exhibit that sense of you are here and you are important. Then he would say to them, you know, you don't have to do this anymore. They didn't know that. I didn't know that when you told me that.

And he said it was such conviction that you got their attention. And he would ask them, you want to get up? And he'd wait. And that's what we're supposed to do. First of all, do you want to stop drinking? If you don't, see me later. I'll wait. Do you want to get up? And if they said, well, yeah, they always did because now they're not alone anymore. You'd say, okay, here comes the magic. Get up? Okay. With such conviction that they can get up.

It isn't that what we do. You don't have to drink anymore. Would you like to stop? Okay. If you would, let me give you the secret. You ready? Don't drink. Oh, okay. But now how do I do that on a continuous basis? I'll make that decision right now. That's cool. How do I not do that? Well, that's what we can show you. Once I fully understood that I could not, not drink. I've had a drink. Isn't that weird? Since I understand, I cannot not drink.

I don't drink. I love it. I've got a warped mind and it says, that's good. I can't use that. Did you get it? Okay. Now that you can no longer not drink, you don't ever have to drink again. Isn't that fun? So I'm doomed. I came to believe that there was a power greater than myself because I watched it walk. His name was Bruce and Roy and Phil. There were a couple other guys. We had a group of about a hundred. That's very clear to me that maybe ten or fifteen of them meant business.

But that ten or fifteen walked this way. And I watched them. Our 12 step study school was one of 23 self-help groups in the penitentiary at that time. This is during the phase when the convicts ran the prisons. And we had our Saturday and Sunday afternoon room and it was really important. And I watched Bruce display a characteristic that I wished I had at one time. I saw him display and live out real courage. One of the other groups that decided they wanted our room and they, prison politicians are pretty good.

They convinced the associate ward in a treatment that what we were doing was pretty meaningless. That they should give them our room. I'd never seen Bruce upset by anything. But the word came that this was our last meeting that it was over. And I watched his feathers. You ever watch a male bird? The feathers plumed up. And he said, I'll take care of this. And a ton of voice that was just scary. Stomped out of there down the steps, around the midway, he's headed for the associate ward in a treatment's office.

Puffed out. And I'm thinking, he's going to the hole. You don't stomp into the associate ward in a treatment's office and take care of anything. Not if you weren't a number. We're not going to see Bruce for several weeks. I don't know, a period of time passed and he came back and the feathers were all in place and it was our school. What I saw was real courage. Now, if he left it alone for selfish reasons, he'd have had the weekends free now.

He could have done whatever he wanted. He didn't do this for him. He did it for us. He put his own life in

jeopardy for us. That's what they give medals for. That's genuine courage. And he did it because he was a spiritual being and this had to be done for us. So I began to see some of the things that I wished I could be. And you had already promised we can show you how to do this. Today I'm a man of great courage and there's no ego in that.

I'm on God's business and I'll do whatever is required of me, which is generally just show up. I don't eat too much and only piss off half the room. Courage is the ability to let go of the familiar. Yeah, write that one down. I stole it. You can write that one down. I got to have someone else so don't give credit here. I've forgotten who so I don't give credit. Courage is the ability to let go of the familiar, which puts me in some place where I begin to understand just a touch of the process we're looking at here.

This is a process not of acquiring more knowledge and more attitudes. It's about letting go of old ones. It's becoming detached. If I am my car, then when I'm not in my car I'm nobody. If I am my job, when I'm not at work, I'm nobody. I must detach from those things so that who I am is who I am, wherever I am. I'm okay with that. This process we're here helps that. Once I understand the where I am God is, it's over. I like black vests. I think I really look cute in black vests.

If I don't care, I like them. There's a whimsical side to my nature because I come from a place where black mess sent another message. I want to get a Schwinn patch and put it on the back of this. My wife won't let me yet. Don't you think that would be cool? Yeah. I walk into putting sober some night when they're still going boom boom boom with my Schwinn patch on. Yeah, someday. Brian's brave enough to do that but I'm not.

You're still back here, Brian? Mighty brave. Mighty brave, yeah. I can see that. I've watched, he is brave. He really believes he can do anything. He's right. So if there's no treatment for this condition, what the hell are we doing here? You ever ask yourself why am I here? Does anybody here really believe that going to meetings will keep you sober? If that's all you do? No. They are a very important component to sobriety.

If meetings alone kept alcoholics sober, everybody who came here would stay sober. If this book could keep you sober, everybody who used it or read it would stay sober and that doesn't happen. Bill makes a statement in here that just caught my attention. After I've done all this work, preparing myself, learning to pray, writing inventory, doing a fist step, beginning to make a man, he says, my new attitude toward alcoholism came without any effort at all on my part.

Isn't that funny? Apparently all this is to keep me busy while God does his work so I don't interfere. And it's mainly to help me locate who I've hurt so I can get square. The whole purpose of inventory is to face and be regular things in myself that are blocking me. And to help me identify the wrongs I have done so I can set them straight. Because I was certified and on paper, and I say that because I was shown in the paper, one of the guys in the group was a clerk, and he said, I thought you were full of crap.

He called me over one day at meetings and he says, but look. And there I was, certified. Sociopath type 2, manic-depressive drug addict. And some of us have grave emotional and mental disorders, but they too can get sober if they have the capacity to be honest. And I was afraid of that. I went to Bruce, or not Bruce, it was Phil that I asked. I said, you know, I'm truly afraid. I may be one of those people that's incapable of being, uh, constitutionally incapable of being honest.

He said, well, that's probably the most honest thing you've ever said. So you're capable of walked off. I've got this head that wants to label everything and measure it and get rid of that. How long have I been sober? For now. And for a lot of nows, but mainly for now. So we get to start square. I was really a little afraid of this insanity business. The last time I had looked within myself when I found I had to kill, couldn't live with it.

And I got an image a while back. God is so gentle and merciful to me. Since you put me in this chair, I must find easy, gentle ways to share the truth with you. And here's the image I got. The first time I looked into the darkness within me, I was looking from the darkness. Now that I've come here, we go back in and look into the darkness from the light. That's a different deal. All of the dragons turn into worms when the lights throw on them.

But there's one that I challenge you to use on a regular basis. And the best way to do it is when you're working with new people. Underneath a rock in my head is a worm called, I ain't got it. I'm not one of those. And it thrives in the darkness. And it eats fear. And it eats complacency. And it gets fat in the darkness. So every now and then take the rock off. And with new people, I just did it with you. Why do you think you're alcoholic?

Is it possible I may not be an alcoholic? Yeah, it's possible. So let's look at the symptoms. Ten seconds. I know I'm an alcoholic. The rock goes back and the worms small. Take it off once in a while. The same thing happens to me that happens to you. I don't ever remember two beers. What kind of a stupid thing is that? Couldn't make any sense. Unless you're my father. Who was in an airplane accident and couldn't sleep well.

So we'd doctor prescribed two beers at night so we could sleep. That's all he had. For him I wasn't stupid. Two beers and I am now awake. We drink a sedative to wake up and take speed to go to sleep. Isn't that dumb? And I wonder why am I different? I ran with an old heroin addict, a poet, Jimmy Morris. And during the time when we were in our Archie artsy-fartsy phase, doing Jack Kerouac and all that stuff, we couldn't stand you young people in what you were doing with the drugs.

We were after spiritual enlightenment and you wanted to go dancing and looking at colors. And you brought all this heat down. So Jimmy and I go up to the upstairs room and heat shoot heroin and I'd shoot speed until we both got to the same place, which was a very calm, quiet place. Boys spend evening visits and quietly with each other. I'm different. I've had to learn about a lot of things in life. My wife has gotten to watch some of my awakenings and they were not always comfortable.

B vitamins are stress vitamins, right? They help normal people relieve stress. Well they're stress vitamins for me too. Within five days of taking B vitamins, I am stressed beyond belief. My body goes bonkers on them. I don't dare take them. Very minute amounts. We heard one time we being the Denver Young People's Group. Incredible group by the way. Almost all of us are still sober and all of us are still active. The group has produced two trustees from that one little group of about 14, 15 people.

But we heard about Bill and his niacin experiment, niacin being one of the vitamins. Because Bill was wanting to try anything that might help an alcoholic. He tried acid once, found out it had no more to offer than the spiritual awakening he'd already had and put it away. But that was based on the fact that the peyote people would discover hallucinogens taken ceremonially helped Indian alcoholics start drinking. So Bill thought he'd try it anyway, he threw it away.

But we tried the niacin. Now, have you any of you taken niacin? It gives you a flush. The blood carriers open up and there's a flush that goes with it. And we stopped. It didn't cause any great harm. But all of us together realized in a couple of weeks, we really like this flush. It's warm flowing and we better not do that because I don't get us in trouble. I took some B-12 on time because it kind of run down one tablet a day, first week.

Two tablets a day, second week. Three tablets a day, a third week and then a quick because I can see the progression. It's my nature when I take it from the outside and put it in, I have to be careful. Anything worth doing is worth overdoing. Well, you guys are drawing a lot of stuff out of me. Not that I don't mind. I was genuinely afraid to go back in and look again with good reason. I find horrendous things in there and they're not acts that I committed that destroyed whole towns.

They're yelling at kids for no reason. It's that kind of shabby shit that I can't live with. And Bruce's compassion and love for me came out. He said, look, there is nothing in there that you haven't already killed you. And if you'll follow this process and go in with God, then you'll be able to get rid of it. And that promise, and it's part of the promise at the beginning of the fourth step to face and be rid of, allowed me to look at these things and say, yeah, I really object to being this way.

I'm willing to let it go. Not the incident, but the self-centeredness that says, I will get this stuff across no matter what I have to do or who I put at risk, me and everybody else. No consideration for anybody. Just a self-centered drive to do the job. God gets to use that, you know. On the other side of that, that kind of stubbornness and obsession is called commitment. Same old stuff, just a different direction, which makes us very dangerous.

You've been around many spiritual people. They're a pain in the neck. They really are. They say what they're going to do, and then they go do it. They tell you what they won't do, and you can't get them to do it. They have this unnerving habit of being on time. And very few of them want to watch this. It just happened to be on time. The ones I follow, my spiritual heroes, are going about a mission. They're headed somewhere. They're doing things.

And it's important enough that they will not be distracted from it. But they're always going to stop and have lunch, cup of coffee, visit for a day or two. Always invite me to come along with them. Don't insist, just invite me. Perfectly okay if I don't go, but if you'd like to ride for a while, come on. And they have fun. They really have fun. And they disappear for a while. I've noticed that about them. I think it's very funny.

I'm one of them. It didn't make me any better. It's just that I'm one of them. And the reason I know that is because they tell me that. They're all pretty, what would you call, public people? They sit in this chair a lot. They share a lot. People know their names. And almost without exception, we are very private people. If you never asked me out again, I'd be absolutely divided. I love being at home. I don't need to come out.

But as long as you ask, I'll come because I really have a good time here. You know what I'll do here? I'll go home and tell my home group about you here. Particularly about you. How we found you a desperate soul on the streets of Canada. With a smile that said, I'm okay. And look at his eyes that says, I'm jumping in front of the next car. I don't care. He couldn't make it. You know that? Couldn't make it, right? You couldn't make it this weekend.

Yeah. No way in the world you could make it this weekend. But here he is. You know what? It's already happened. You might as well relax. It's too late. You're going to get well. No shit. What does that mean? I needed to find a working description of sanity and insanity. I've got to participate in this. All of me. And I found it in the story of the car salesman named Jim. Because he is me. And there's a lot in this story.

First of all, Jim had been a six times. Worked with the people who put all this together. Our founders. Worked with Dr. Selklin. Got the information straight. It wasn't fuzzy at all. And drank anyway. So apparently the information by itself is not enough. So we come to a day when Jim now who had owned this car agency. Now after his sixth relapse, he's working for the agency he used to own. I try to get into their head in these stories.

I want to be them and see. And I can get that. It comes to work on more than with a little low grade resentment. Just kind of ticked that he has to work for the company that he used to own. Has a few words with his boss. Pour some gasoline on the fire. It's what he did. Low grade resentment needs fuel. So you have a few words with the person. He punched the back and pretty start getting involved in it. And then he decided, I think I'll go out in the country and look for a prospect for a car.

And I think what, now we've been. I've been a salesman. If I want to sell cars, I ought to go where there's people, not cows. And there may have been a prospect out there. But interestingly enough, he stops at a roadhouse that he's been too many times before. He knew what was there to have lunch. A roadhouse is just a place that serves food and booze. Has a sandwich and a glass of milk. Something in his head said, well, Jim, you've been sober long enough.

You can have an ounce of whiskey if you just put it in the milk. I'm thinking, wait a minute. You know what whiskey does to milk? It curdles it right there on the spot. Without hesitation. Down it goes. Then he did the thing that's the clue for the alcoholic. He said, I think I'll have another sandwich and another glass of milk. And might as well have another shot of whiskey while I'm at it. The experiment was so successful, meaning he didn't tear the bar apart.

Didn't go instantly insane in a dramatic way. He was instantly insane. I think I'll have another. He ends up back in the nut ward again. And the boys go to see him and they ask him, what happened? Tell us what happened. We're interested in relapse. When I say you don't have to drink again, I mean it. But I'm very interested in relapse because it happens so often. What happened? And he told them the story. And Bill says, whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity.

How can such lack of proportion and if the ability to think straight be called to anything else? And I got it. That's what's wrong with me. I don't understand proportion and I can't think straight. I am rubber minded. I cannot think my way out of this deal. And I get to look at proportion. I don't seldom ever get angry. I go from calm to killer rage just like that. Over really important stuff. It cut off on the free with stupid stuff.

No proportion in that. I heard myself tell a line one time as a matter of fact. Ten years or so over we were in LA and they were talking about these freeway killings where somebody cuts you off and the guy comes in behind you and shoots you in the head. I said, I just don't understand that. Yes I do. Clearly. Fear is a game you play. They 50 cents ride the roller coaster get scared. I like terror. Terror makes me feel alive and useful.

I can take on the world when I'm terrified. No proportion. I got a little family and there's not enough money so I'll take on a second job. I want to be a good father. A good husband. Now I'm working two jobs so I'm selling her home. And then some of that money has to go from the babysitter. And the money gets used up so I need to get a third job. And I think all of this is going to work and before long all I can see is screw up and go get drunk.

No proportion. Simple lives are for amateurs. You make good lives? Really important lives. Yeah. The ones I do are really good. They have to be. I've got to engage you in them long enough to get you the hell out of my life. I say, you know, what's going on up here? I remember my dad one time. God bless him. Somebody had told him I was now shooting speed and it just broke his heart. And he challenged me in the kitchen one day.

He said, I understand you're injecting that stuff now. And I had tracks here so I took my coat and pulled it up here and looked him in the eye and said, how dare you. Look, I'm clean. And threw it back in. That's a lie. That's dishonest. They can't feel bad so I don't have to get to it. And we do stuff like that. Lack of proportion in the ability to think straight. So maybe sanity is proportion and I will be able to think straight.

Meaning I can say, if I do this, this will probably occur. How will this affect you? And later on our principals talk about that. I'm to ask that question. Is this selfish or not? What kind of effect is this actually going to have on you? If I say yes to something, how will it affect Jackie? She's part of my life. Every decision I make affects her. She needs to be consulted. We'll talk more about that later. Bruce also said, we will assume you went insane about two seconds after birth so we don't have to psychological track all of it.

Just forget what you think you know about anything and we'll start from scratch. And somehow I was able to do that. What time you guys want to have lunch? I smell like smokers psychosis. Now I'm beginning to get in a direction. Is this what you were looking for? Because I'm beginning to get a direction from you that we're going to go through these steps here. We will sometime today, if you wish, take a third step together once we're prepared for it.

We'll go through some inventory. We'll talk about amends and how you live this way if that's what you want to do. So the kind of insanity I suffer from is alcoholic insanity. Selflessness, self-centeredness, lack of proportion, and I'm unable to think straight. So if I can't think straight, I won't use my mind to think with. What am I going to use? Because I'm damn sure I'm not going to use yours either. I've been to meetings with you.

You're going to be my advisor? I don't think so. Not unless you have changed. The kind of sponsors that I got never ever told me what to do. I know I'll do that for you. They made strong suggestions, but they were mainly to help me find out, what do you want to do? I'd go, what do you think of this? He'd say, well, what do you think of this? I think one of the most profound experiences of my life was watching freedom occur, because I wanted that too.

I worked in the dishroom in the penitentiary, and except for yard and work, we were maximum security, we were just locked down. What's just fine with me? I've always sent me to my room, please. That's where I want to go. I've got Louie Lamar, and I saw bed. I'm perfectly content. Put me in the hole. I don't care. I've got a mind that I could get out of this. In fact, Jackie and I had the experience a while back. I have a lot to do with our local penitentiary where I did in the last time, and they have a big muse in there, and they had taken some of the cells from the old cellblock, and they had them on display.

I've said for years that I lived in an 8x10 toilet. Well, one of the cells I lived in was there. It's seven by nine. We checked it. I made it larger so I could fit it. If that doesn't tell something about your world, we can make it larger or smaller. It all happens right up here. So I'd be locked down for the night, and Bruce would come by and visit with me. And I'm slow. It took a few times for me to realize he's getting out of his cell when he wants to.

I want what he has. He was free. He's absolutely free. He told me on one of those visits he gave me this. Do you know that it's possible for me to think one thought at a time? And that hooked me and drew me in all the way. There's my answer. I was having trouble with serenity so he made me look it up. You know, I've been to the first day before the first day of creation on acid where it's really quiet because there's nothing happening.

That's serene. And I know that is not what we're talking about here with serenity. Let me look it up and the definition that works for me is clarity of thought. Serenity is clarity of thought. One thought at a time. It also helps me understand that my feelings of the product of my thinking, not the other way around. If I have too much going on up here, then I become agitated. And the feeling will be agitation. I do a little trick. I make it what's on my mind list to this day.

They suggest in the 10th and 11th step in the evening you might want to make plans for the next day. And that's what I do. I get to sleep good because my biggest concern, my anxiety is usually that I'm afraid I'm going to forget something important. Well, put it on paper then you're not going to forget it. It just kind of clears the decks. Clarity of thought. One thought at a time. I'm able not to think one thought at a time.

Not always. There's a certain joy in being confused. I'm also able, now and then, I must tell you, to not think at all. There is my fervent hope that when my time comes that I'm there and that's where I'd like to leave this planet from, from utter silence. Can you imagine that being quiet? Good Lord. The way to learn to think one thought at a time is to get rid of all the other thoughts. You can't learn how to think one thought at a time.

You just get rid of everything that isn't one thought. And the process will show us that and I'll show you precisely how I work that so that occurs. It says we're supposed to talk to God about in every circumstance in our life. And I practice that coming out. I would go to the Safeway store to the bread rack. I don't know what happened while I was away, but they started having 15 of everything. 15 kinds of peas, 15 kinds of bread, 15 kinds of meat.

So I'd stand in front of this bread counter and I don't know what to do. And I would pray. I might as well practice. And the way I would pray would be to ask, and I pray in here, not out here, for my present state of physical being, which of these should I be eating? Then I'd let everything go out of focus. And whether either stayed in focus or came back into focus, that's the one I took. Now whether that was valid or not doesn't make the slightest bit of difference.

It was the practice. I've made some bad choices. I'm about 15, 20 pounds overweight. But that doesn't seem to hurt my spiritual sense. It kind of says, go for it kid. You're on borrowed time anyway. When my dad was getting ready to die, he had problems with his stomach. So all the people were trying to help him. Took him off of his favorite foods. And he loved chili. Loved it. 86 years old getting ready to go and he asked the doctor, kind of just had some chili.

She was very wise. She says, of course. Whatever you want. She and I had a talk too. What's it going to do? Killing? And he had a sense of humor. After that, we all went, this was at a time. It was a family consultation with the doctor because things were going kind of bad for him. We all went over to Denny's. And they also, the family believed that he was involved in some dementia. I knew better. He wasn't. He was just losing his memory.

And for my dad, that was a critical thing. He was an unmeasured genius. Every test they tried, they couldn't measure him. So losing his memory was important to him. He said to me one time, you know, this memory loss thing, Don, has some real benefits. I only have to rent one movie for the rest of my life. But we took him over to Denny's. And he's got his chili. And I'd been gone. I'd been down in North Carolina. So I hadn't seen what they saw that they called dementia.

I thought it might even be Alzheimer's. So I'm watching for some signs. He's got the chili and he had some toast with some jelly on it. And he brings it over to her and he reaches down with a spoon. And it looks like he's going to put chili on the jelly. And I'm watching and he looked at me and went, gotcha. Okay. It's the same man that gave me the, I'm giving you these because they were it. He gave me a truth for life.

All you really need to live a decent and good life is honor and wisdom. You must have enough honor to keep every promise you ever make no matter what the personal consequences. Enough wisdom not to make too many promises like that, which is consistent with us. We make promises we can't keep. So if that's my problem and that's causing me guilt, what I need to do is not learn how to keep promises. It's to learn how to quit making so damn any promises, which is based on what will you think of me.

When I no longer care, I no longer have to bullshit you. This thing gets really simple. They want to do noon. How long do you want to go on? I don't want to bore you to death. I'd like you to stay all day. We can take it to pieces and there's at least two smokers getting ready to hurt me. It's now 11.15. We're going to eat it noon. Part of what I'm postponing for is that during our next session, I've got a feeling from this group that we can move right up to and into the third step.

It'll take about an hour. If you'd like to do that, we can fool around here. We can take a break. I don't want to go any further in the process that I'm building, but I'll tell you what I like to do. If you want to sit, well, nobody's getting up, so I assume you want to sit for a little bit. What's on your mind? I'd love to ask you, have you asked me anything you want, and we'll visit about that. Nobody has anything at all on their mind.

Well, good. We're all saying that, don't we? I like him. Do you see what he's learned to do? He's a carver. Right. Absolutely. Do you ever watch a carver? It's like Michelangelo. You take a block of wood, and he wants a face. And you just carve away everything that doesn't look like what the face looks like, and there it is. Kind of what you do? Yeah. Just take away what it doesn't look like, and there it is. And that's the spiritual life, huh?

You can all do it. Yeah. That's what this program is about. Taking away things that aren't me so I can show up.