

DON P ARCHIVE

Big Book Weekend

2003 | Part 5 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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That's the new idea. I'm not only to help you personally. I'm to try to help show you how to help others. And you're to show them how to help others and still others. So what happened in this hospital that day was there for me when I showed up and will be there for your great-grandchildren if they happen to show up here. We want to keep it that clear. That's clear. So what happens? And that's my job is to make sure it stays that clear. Isn't that a trip? General Motors never offered me anything that appealing. Man, I get to get out there in the world and take on the dragons. Oh, they're just drunks. My friend, Abby, emphasize the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs.

That does presume I will have some. What I must be cautious of is not to have more affairs than I have principles. There will be work, there will be AA, there will be neighborhood, there will be all kinds of activities along the way, and I will participate them. And these principles apply in all of them. If I can't do and be and behave the same way at home that I am in an AA meeting, I'm not doing this. I'm a fake. The ultimate goal is to be the same person wherever I am, and I can't pull that off, not by myself. We come close sometimes. Oh, yeah. Do you feel at peace in this room?

Yeah, that's because I'm at peace, partly, and because you're at peace. If you come into our home, one of our new guys is really a new guy. He just graduated from high school last week or two weeks ago. Big old gorgeous kid. I want to adopt him and move him into the basement. Jackie said we can do that. Just one of those. He said he likes coming into our house because he's never walked into any place on the planet where he felt more love and peace.

The grandchildren come and they just run amuck because they're not afraid of anything in the house. The worst that's going to happen is I'm going to lock the back door while in the yard so I can get a five minute break. And that's only in my head. I haven't done it yet. I wonder how well, I know how Giana'd take it. She'd break in the window. What was it? We got robbed one time, burglarized. Stupid burglar. It was one of the neighborhood kids.

It was snowing and the tracks went from his house to mine. My older daughter says, oh, we walked into the house and it was clear we've been had. I had to quickly jump past how burglar feels when it gets burglarized. What goes around comes around. My older daughter said, oh my goodness, what am I going to tell the kids at school? I have been telling them that God watches over us because that's what we teach in our home.

I was able to say to her, he did, honey. We weren't here. She's got her stuff. We're going to have a yard sale anyway. But it was during that time that we changed our locks. We put on the kind of things that you have to have a key or you don't get in. If you kick it down, the whole hat door has to go down before anything comes out. This is a secure house. You can't get in. The kids forgot their keys. What was she, 13?

We come home and they're in the house. They just figured a way to open the window in the back and break in that way. If an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for

others, he could not survive the certain trials in most spots ahead. That's very important to me personally because I've sponsored so many people and big book people, God bless them, sometimes have a problem. They think that working in the steps is the work.

When I hear it all the time, I'm doing the work. The steps are not the work of alcoholics and Anonymous. The steps are preparation for the work. The work is working self-sacrifice for others, not constant work on me. I do continuing constant work on me. That isn't how I go spiritually. I go spiritually by helping you. It's on page 15. We've already got it. There's a question. Is that how you want your life to look? If it isn't, go home. Don't bother with this. This will produce an experience that will force you to help somebody else.

What a bitch. Even when you don't want to. It's snowy and it's cold and I'm tired and she's hot and the phone rings. When I got to go out and I don't want to go out, God gave me the strength and I go. There's no choice, no matter. Bill had a problem following that, fully awakened spiritually, beginning to be the leader of a movement where he killed innumerable people before he found the magic with Dr. Bob, but at least that's his word. For two years or better, he suffered from deep, severe depression.

Serious stuff. Nearly drove him back to drink, he said. Steps wouldn't work. Nothing would work except when he got like that, he would go back down to town's hospital and work with another drunk and then save the day. Took him out of his cell. That worked when nothing else worked. He wrote a pamphlet that I commend to you called emotional sobriety. It's in the grapevine where he talks about his depressions and what he found out about them.

Because he was baffled if the steps in God could take care of his alcohol and what couldn't he take care of his depression. What he discovered was the depression was caused by unhealthy dependencies on outside things, including an unhealthy dependency on A. He was getting his strokes from A. He said it took every ounce of will to break these and to set him free of that depression. Unhealthy dependency. Alcoholism will not catch me here.

It'll catch me at 37,000 feet with no telephone and nobody to talk to. I cannot rely on you. I can trust you. I can count on you. But I can't rely on you to keep me sober. Because when it creeps up on me and it will, every one of us will have certain blank spots at certain times. You won't be there. I must have the spirit within me alive and well and working. Or I'm a dead cookie, I just know that. And for me, to drink is not to die. I'm absolutely certain if I drank again.

Unfortunately, I would live for a while. It would be a horrible life. I couldn't stand it. So, I don't be morbid. I'll share one more thing. We'll take a break. These things don't come to me because I think about them. This actually happened to me about 20 years ago. I had given a little talk back in New York and was flying home on Sunday. And because I fly so much with United, because they're a Denver hub, they have status things there.

Premier, Premier Executive, Big Shop, 1K, all kinds of stuff. They now are adding a new one called Elite Status. Isn't that weird? Well, that means you don't get any free miles, but you get elite. You get to board first. Yeah. Who cares? Anyway, on this particular fly, if they, sometimes if they have an empty first class seat, they'll bump into it. Because of that Premier Executive status. And I thought for a while to test because I was getting some kind of reward here.

Then God's work well and I'm important. What I found out from talking to the United people, because if you fly with them long enough you're going to fly with one of them eventually, is that what was going on is that they couldn't sell that expensive first class seat, but they could resell mine. So they'll move me up there, then they can sell this one, put somebody else in it. So much for how important I am. They make it look good.

Anyway, I'm up in first class on the way home, evening flight. And I'm in fit spiritual condition and fit emotional condition and fit mental condition. I'm going home. To the family I love, to the home I love, I know I really have done God's work. I've also had a lot of fun because I like the people. I've got about a three and a half hour flight. I'm going to get to read a book I've been waiting for a long time to read because I've been busy.

In the first class they serve real food on real plates. You see I have real silverware. I find this bizarre. Since the crisis on September 11th. Now you get a real plate and a real spoon and a real fork and a plastic knife. Now I'm warped, but I can do more damage with a fork than I can't have stupid knife. If that's what I wanted to do. I don't say anything because they're paranoid enough without me. But I'm up there and we're getting ready to eat and the lights, you know, it was just a nice room if you will.

The lights were fine and things were just cool. In my corner of my eye I saw the flight attendant pouring this burgundy red stuff into my seat mate's glass. Now understand I am extremely vulnerable to alcohol because I don't see it. The mental obsession is gone. I don't see it. My attention has to be drawn to it for me to recognize it. The burgundy red stuff going in and I turned over and looked at it because the way the lights were hitting it.

My mind said that really looks good. I'm convinced that those of us with some significant sobriety are in far more danger of drinking because of the truth than we are lies. You've got to come up with a lot of lies over quite a period of time to convince me it's okay for me to drink. But that really looked good. Then my mind said, I bet that's going to taste good too. Well of course it would. Why else would you give it to him?

Then my mind went into that reservoir about what I know about wine and still not recognizing wine and said, I bet that's going to make his whole dinner taste better. Of course it would. That's one of the functions of wine, you know, is to clear the palate of the greases of this course so that this one tastes better. And at that moment all I can describe to you is that a prayer began in me. I became aware of the spirit moving in me.

And when that happens, I pull in immediately. I did not start to pray. I didn't know I needed to pray. But I didn't know I needed to listen so I went inside and got very, very still. And became aware that my very next thought would have been. I should probably have one of those without ever thinking of wine. That's how vulnerable I am. So I must have that going. I must keep that relationship such that when I don't know any better, I'm safe and protected.

Okay. Later we'll talk about some behavior and some anger things. One of that same spirit saved me and others from my wrath. Damn. It's 2.35. How long a break would you like before we get back together? I'd like to kind of move this in toward the third step and move on into the program itself, sometime this afternoon. Yeah. And we're close. 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30. 15 seems to be a consensus. Okay. You don't want to miss a note of this tune.

Oh, there he is. Hi, Brian. I know. It's one of the better ways that I can respond to looking upon your

condenser. That's a very kind man back there. My wife threw up in the car on the way up. You ain't seen nothing yet. He is short though, did you know what I'm saying? No. Now I am impressed. Yeah. There's only one decent thing to do on being a decent man. I do it. I surrender. But you are cute. Would you agree with that?

Tall and cute. That's what he's always wanted to be. I really wanted what they had. Meaning I could see in at least these three people, the three primary ones. And some of the ones coming in, I could see change. And I could see men who were whether I understood or not living a very successful life, a peaceful life, and a useful life in a difficult environment. I'd seen Bruce do courage. I watched Roy do a funny thing over a period of time.

Every now and then Roy would get pissed because the prison politicians would encroach into A and the message changes. Because A is a power source, both the administration and the inmates in any penitentiary battle over A groups because they are a power source. And the administration does not want inmates having any power at all, and the inmates already have most of it. So there's a, well yeah, they do. It's their university.

So there's a constant tension going on there. But watch these guys kind of sliding through all that. And they said, when I asked them about the change that they had taken place, that's right. They had been changed. In essence, they said, and God changed me. And I really didn't care who changed them. They'd been changed. That's all I knew. And if it was God okay, and I remember once in my eagerness, I went back to my cell and said the third step prayer was all the fervor I could muster.

And had one of the worst experiences of my entire life. Because nothing happened. I'm geared to something happening. I might as well not have said it. Nothing happened. This disturbed me, frightened me, and pissed me off. Which is my normal response to. And I had learned along the way already, if you do something your sponsor tells you to do and you don't get the results you think you ought to be getting, go complain about it.

And I did. Where's mine, Bruce? Bill had this thing. You had, where's mine? Well, dummy, he said, you ought to be grateful you didn't have a flash of light. They didn't really kill you your whole life. And we talked about them. The different ones. And he's right. They hadn't really killed me. And then he got to the truth. He said, God knows now that in your present state you probably can't stand one more big shock anyway.

So he will probably come to you gently as you did with me over a period of time. Which was kind of good news. Because I really wasn't up for any more big shocks. But I had this illusion that I can only describe as that. I think what I probably expected out of that was that my cylinder would spring open instantly. My clothes would go from green to white. And the guard would say, all right, I bet you can go home now. We don't need you anymore.

Nothing happened. And I want to know how do I make this real. I don't want any more of the first day before the first day. This got to be real. And he paraphrased something in the book. He said, God will reveal himself to you as you reveal yourself to you. Then he provided one of the greatest services that has ever been afforded me. He spent some time with me destroying all of my conceptions, my illusions, my delusions concerning God.

He'd ask me something and wipe it out. I ended up in that discussion where I had nothing more to describe. I was just talking about Santa Claus or some mythical, magical creature. It had no reality at all. It even had to let go of Jesus loves me because it was getting in the way. I'm left with nothing. And I was truly upset. And I can

remember hollering at him. You're asking me to turn my life over to the carriage. Nothing.

He said, well, why not? Nothing can run up better than you've been doing it. He was kind of a smart ass. What he really knew is that once I described everything, I had one last real reservation. And we all have one. Years may sound like mine. Over the years, people have said it sounds like theirs. I have never ever been afraid of the unknown. I love the unknown. That's where the action is. Okay. What I'm afraid of always is what I think is going to happen.

I make it up in my head. And this was one of those deals where if I turn my life over to the care of God, he's got work for me to do. And I knew what the job was and I didn't want it because I had a reference for it. I believed and told him that I was afraid that if I did this total surrender to the service of God, that he put me on the corner of Colfax and Broadway and Denver, handing out watchtower magazines and asking strangers, have you been saved, brother?

Now, I couldn't see me doing this. I've got this palatial suite and sell B49 right in the car of steak penitentiary. But I couldn't see me doing that. And he said, well, let's talk about that. Now, for you new folks, that's sponsor talk. It does not mean let us talk about anything. It means if you will be still for a minute, I'll bring out the big gun and see when you get past your head. In the most loving way possible, he took out his spiritual sword and he went for my jugular.

See, I had a reference for this. When I was in high school, we had a guy down there on that corner. We called the brown man because he wore brown suit in a brown shirt in a brown tie and brown shoes in a brown hat. He had a brown attitude and asked strangers, if you've been saved. He was a street corner evangelist. At least he'd drive by and make fun of it. And that's what I was afraid of. If I really started doing God's work that you'd start making fun of me, I would rather die than feel like a fool.

So I said, well, let's talk about that. He said, Don, do you suppose when that guy down around that corner handing out those watchtowers, do you suppose he had breakfast where he wanted to? I said, well, yeah, sure. He said, well, you didn't. Do you suppose that he's wearing clothes that he picked out to do it in? I said, probably. He says, you're not. Do you suppose when he's all through making a fool of himself down there, that he gets to go home?

And he had me because I didn't. And what he did with the sharp sort of truth and the kind of courage it takes to present that lovingly is he led me into my new mind and laid the foundation. And the foundation of my entire life since that time has been simply this. Anything at all that God may have in mind for me is better than anything at all, but I will ever have in mind for me, period. And I really do live that way.

And I get willful from time to time. But that is how I live. It's a good life. Anyway, he sent me off to consider that. And I did come to the time of this decision. I can do that. I'm willing to do that. Anything's better than what I was. Went back to him and said, OK, I'm ready. I'm quite willing to go down and hand that watchtower. He laughed at me. He said, well, that's noble. But he's already got a guy down there doing that.

Probably got something else in mind for you. And we don't know what it is. Oh. Squared and confronted with the issue of faith and reliance upon God. I have no idea what he has in mind for me. But let's go. Part of my

thought process is during that time, I have a mind that will not stop. It goes even when I'm asleep. I finally learned to cherish my dreams because they're really something. Full stereo, technicolor, surround sound, real.

I just love them. Good, bad or good. I don't care. They're real. I've gotten where any more. If I get interrupted in one, I can get back in and just keep it going for a while. Final words going. Because those barriers are down. But I had something really interesting to say and I lost it. You remember what it was, Paul? You've been reading my mind. OK. You noticed that. Yeah. Yeah. No, there's five or six different things I can say.

It's really important to me that I say only what you need to hear. The second part of my prayer is always, please help me tell it like it is and carry the message you would have me carry to this particular group and to me. And sometimes I just get off because I like the funny little side bars better. Don't know what he has in mind for me or for you. But it gets pretty well simplified here. And one thing I know for sure that God has in mind for me is that each day for the rest of my life, I am to somehow engage in alcoholic who may or may not know if you're alcoholic you don't ever have to drink again.

And together we will do certain things of a spiritual nature that guarantee that neither of us will ever be useless again. That's all I know for sure. So life gets pretty simple. The rest of it is playtime, but I must be ready on any given day. And since I don't get to pick them, I just open myself up to it. People have asked me lately because I've reached the age where I'm a bit opinionated and mouthy. I don't have anybody left I need to impress.

Which by the way, when I became aware of that was a scary thing because I suddenly got flooded all the ways in which I try to impress people. How many meetings do you go to? It's like there's somebody keeping score somewhere. And I got to tell you the truth. I'm down to about 30, some weeks at 40, but I've had to cut way back. I just don't have what it takes anymore. I attend three formal meetings a week, one of which may stop happening here pretty quick.

I have my home group. I have a Tuesday morning thing I do with the guys. And Wednesday night we have a potluck at our house and then a meeting on the traditions and the concepts. And then I'm in touch with probably 30 other people during the week, face to face around the telephone. And anytime two or more alcoholics are gathered for sobriety, that counts. That's where my life is. I like meetings, but my life is in the one-to-one context.

Dr. Bob was asked what he thought about meetings. He said, I think they're important, but they're not vital. What is vital is our daily contact with each other. And meetings provide a place for us to do that. But the message I got and the message I carry is it's just face to face one-to-one. This is where it really happens. And it usually happens when I'm not looking for it. But anyway, how am I going to discover what he has in mind for me?

Well, the method I was shown is to find out to get rid of the things that I have in mind for me. And once those are out of the way, then I can hear what he has in mind for me. You see, God never yells at me, ever. Never hits me with a club. Never ever yells at me. If I don't have a quiet mind, I will not hear that we small voice. Because God is not rude. It comes by invitation only. It comes every time he's invited. And it's very gentle and quiet from my experience.

I mean, maybe loud and noisy for some people, but for me it's been very quiet. So I begin to get some guides from my daily life from that. If I'm going to let God demonstrate through me what he can do, I need to be prepared so that what he does is consistent with me. It comes by invitation only. There's a good God. I won't bother you unless you invite me. I would never think of dropping by your house without calling first to see if there's time available here.

My worst character defect is my rudeness. So I need to get rid of that. So I'll find out, are you busy? If I call you on the phone, do you have a minute or two? And then I'll wait for the answer. I get a lot of them call me and say, do you have a minute before I answer? They're talking. Most of the time that's all right. To the best of my knowledge, I've never, when God's at hand, been lied to. So perhaps that's the way I should keep myself.

Get rid of my need to lie, which is nothing more than the need to impress. Lies are so you will take a particular view toward me that I want you to take. That's what lies produce. And when I don't care about your attitude anymore, then I can tell you the truth. And if I'm not letting God work the truth for me, that will be done so gently, you don't even know you've been whacked for three days. Or the truth will become acceptable.

Okay? Part of what I'm trying to do is use, make the truth acceptable. I know you like I know myself. And that's why I can love you like I do. And I know that you are the place where if you don't do something soon, you will die. And I just know that. I also know that you've already done it so you don't have to die. Shit, is he talking to me again? I didn't want to come here, you know. I'm coming to be picked on. So I ran off to take my first inventory and I didn't wait for any instructions.

I was the head of the 12th step study school. One pan of 10. I'd heard somebody say something about a list of your rotten stuff. So I spent two hours making a list of the most rotten things I've ever done. I went back to this sponsor who had been very kind to me, very loving, very patient. He looked at it and he said, that's garbage. He wrote that to impress me. Get away from me. Just get away. Crushed me. I'd spent two hours in a genuine effort to please him.

And my God, somebody's going to listen to this. So I went and found old Leroy. He was a member of our group. He was one of those who was a show voter, but he was one of our group. And I had a series of spiritual awakenings. Now, for me, a spiritual awakening is any time any alcoholic anywhere understands any part of the truth. That's a spiritual awakening. And Leroy agreed and he sat there and listened to my fifth step.

And I'd tell him one of these bad things I'd done. He would say, well, that wasn't that bad. And I'd tell him something else. And he'd say, well, that wasn't that bad. And I began to wake up, because some of it really was that bad. And what I woke up to is that once again I had picked somebody who would tell me what I wanted to hear, so I didn't have to do anything here. Didn't have to make any changes. I knew immediately if I didn't stop that immediately, that I would die a very ugly death.

And I'm not afraid of death. I've not been afraid of death for a long time. But to die an ugly death means that for some period just before that, I'm going to have to live a very ugly life. And that's beyond my ability to grasp. I can't do that. So woke up. The lovely thing about once you've surrounded on a spiritual path, even if you do it wrong, it comes out right. It's a bitch. We're warmed up to third step. Don't take this unless you're reading me in business.

Because you're going to get help whether you want it or not. You can't change your mind. And old Gerba Haney, I loved her. She was crusty away. She said, if you're going to sin, enjoy it. Because there is nothing worse than a sniveling sinner. I've had people who made a serious third step and had a definite experience and then decided to change their mind. Their lives just go to hell. They can't even be bad anymore. They try it.

It just doesn't work. Some of them try to drink. Circumstances get in the way. It's awful. And I love it. So I knew that this thing was a lie. And then I knew that I needed to do what was correct. Went back through the study school and through Bruce and finally wrote an inventory the way it's done in this book. Shabby little thing. Didn't have much memory. I've been living on terror, alcohol and speed for 14 years. There were some things that burned out.

And they're still burned. The function that puts labels on things like names. If I'm a waste bit tired, it doesn't work. So if I call you sweetie or honey or kid, just know that I love you anyway, but I don't know who the hell you are. Your name is gone. But I'll ever forget who you are. I don't remember your name, but I know what your name is. Someday I'll remember it. Or I'll get honest enough to see. I don't remember what the hell your name is.

Eric! I should remember that. I think that's my son's name. His is Sean Eric though. Gave him two powerful names. He's a doofus anyway. Before I go off into that, Bill continues to remind us how to go about this. He teaches us on page 18 again how to 12 step. The ex-problem drinker who's found this solution and who has properly armed effects about himself can generally win the confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.

Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished. So we have to have an identification. We talk a lot about singleness and purpose here in AA. And there's a real reason for that. And this is it. One alcoholic identifying with another alcoholic is the beginning of recovery for one of them. And until that occurs, recovery will not occur either. And while most of everything we know about alcoholism came to us from non-alcoholics because they really do understand.

The doctor's opinion, we got our spiritual stuff from other spiritual people. We got it from non-alcoholics. But because of the nature of the alcoholic mind, as an alcoholic, I don't believe you understand unless you're like me. So if you present the same information to me, I can hear it and then we can go. If you don't have that little twist in your thinking, I know that, and I will reject whatever you say. So we must remain singleness and purpose has a real definite meaning.

I do not want to take a non-alcoholic on an alcoholic 12-step call. Okay. There's too great a risk that somebody will die. Not that I'm going to save them anyway, but there is that risk. The exception to that is one of the best calls we ever made, my sponsor and his wife and myself and my former wife went on a 12-step call. We were headed for dinner and had a 12-step call instead. We got there and it's just elderly later in the mid-60s.

She's dying, drinking herself to death, and her place is a mess. Her maid had abandoned the ship, couldn't stand it anymore. Gary and I knew what our job was. We also knew it wasn't time for us. There's some directions in here of the mind clearing a little before we present the message. This lady needed a bath and some comfort. So we sat aside for an hour or so while our wives gave her a bath. Gary and I did the dishes and cleaned the house and made her presentable so she wouldn't be embarrassed when they finally brought her out to where we could talk to her.

I'd have been terribly embarrassed if you'd come to my house and seen it in that shape. We worked together and always have where I grew up in this kind of activity. Then Gary and I got to talk to her, one alcoholic to another. Age and sex made no difference. We're talking about alcoholism. And before we spent five or six hours there, it never did get to dinner. She had been given what's really available here, love, comfort, understanding, and the truth.

She's dead now. She never drank again. When it was all done, we asked her like Bill and Bob did. You mind if we come back tomorrow? Put her to bed. Can we come back tomorrow? She was glad. We came back and we took her to a meeting and began to introduce her to you. I wish they were all that clean and clear that the principals involved in that are all right here. Okay? We have found this solution and we just waited for the right time and gave her the truth.

Which is very simple. So anyway, he talks to us about the three different kinds of drinkers. I love this section. And let's go. The average social drinker who can take it and leave it alone. Is that me? Can't take it or leave it alone. Let me give you one to play with. Scott Lee gave me this. I love this one. Play with this and then you're headed at 2.30 in the morning when you can't sleep. You ready? I've never had enough.

But I have had too much. Which leads me to conclude that enough is way beyond too much. Isn't that good? Oh yeah. Well, he got it anyway. Don't worry about it. Think about it later. And if you understand Paul Scott because he doesn't understand what he just said. I am not a social drinker. Then we have a certain kind of hard drinker that even looks a little like an alcoholic. They may drink enough to gradually impair him and they might even die early.

Bad drinker. My Uncle Walter. But if a sufficient reason comes up like ill health or the warning of a doctor or whatever given a sufficient reason to quit, this person can stop or moderate. And there's the kicker that kicks me out. I may pretend that I can stop for good enough reason, but I know I can't moderate. Alcoholics Anonymous has a lot of those folks in Alcoholics Anonymous today. And I really don't mind if they're here.

They came in through treatment. They have good reason to quit and have. They like our fellowship. They like everything about it, but they tell me the truth. I don't have to do this. I'm very quit. I don't need to get upset with them either. They don't have to do this. And I certainly don't want them to go anywhere else. If you got this far, you're only one drink away from full blown alcoholism. Don't take another one.

But the average hard drinker can stop or moderate given a good enough reason. Is that me? If I bring my own memories to the question, the answer is no. Absolutely not. No way in the world. How about you? I can trick myself into thinking I can quit because I did once for a little while. Four months. My God. Can I moderate? No. Then there's a real alcoholic. May I start out as a moderate drinker? There may not become a continuous hard drinker.

The biggest inventory list I have ever seen came from a librarian who had never gone anywhere or done anything. Bad drunk. Definitely an alcoholic. This person has met it. The phone book I think, I don't know. How much interaction can you have when you're either in a library or home drinking and reading? But at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption once he starts to drink.

Is that me? Yep. Is that you? Yep. You lose control? Welcome home. Well we know you lose control. Oh yeah. There's nothing I can do about that. I can't stop that and neither can you. It's going to take a power greater than me to stop that. And I don't have it. And you don't have it either. I've been listening to you. That's what you told me from the beginning. You don't have it. We gathered together, seemed to form an arena where that can occur.

Isn't that nice? So we form groups. Anyway, so the main problem the alcoholic center in his mind rather than his body. I won't go in alcoholically insane if I don't drink. I won't lose control of my drinking if I don't drink. Have you ever had the experience of not wanting to drink again? Yeah, good drunk can decide. I better not do this again. Did you drink after that? Yeah. Stay right here. Did you do that more than once?

Move closer. How do you feel about that? To make it mad? Yeah. Your friend's going to steal a drink and get away with it, huh? Yeah. Pretty soon you have to quit hanging around with them. Pretty much that. Yeah, because I can't drink like you do. Welcome home. It's really that simple. I've made four 12-step calls this morning. It's really that simple. One to one. Let's talk about this for a minute. Here's how I drank.

How did you drink? Sounds like the same, doesn't it? Good. Then let's most stay here. We better not go out there. If you'll point your friends out to me, I'm going to avoid them also. OK. Here's a book that over the years, when it's 68 years now, although it hadn't been written that long, 60-some odd years, has been in the hands of millions of us. And I don't know anybody I've ever talked to that after being here in a while, doesn't say, I could write this better than it is.

If this just changed here a little bit, and we haven't changed the thing, essentially. So I kind of figured that whatever is in here must be really important. Every word of it. And then every now and then I come up with something in italics. That must be really important. So on page 24 there's one of those. The fact is that most alcoholics for reasons yet obscure have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called willpower becomes practically nonexistent.

We are unable at certain times to call into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of either a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink. That's as true for me today as it was 35 years ago. I do not have the power of choice in drink. Thank God. When I had the choice I always made the wrong one. And I am without any personal defense against the first drink.

Left to mind devices, it will look good, it will taste good, I probably ought to have one. No defense at all. I'm powerless. Wonderful. Forevermore. There are people in A who say that A gave them back the power of choice. I'm glad for them. That is not true for me. Okay. Nor do I want to play with that. If this is true, this is true. Nowhere in here does it say I get it back. It says, oh, it's gone. Lost the power of choice.

What a relief. Oh, isn't that a gorgeous baby. Is that your baby? You are a blessed man. And this is your wife? Goodness. I'd get down on my knees and bay at the moon if I were you. But there is a solution. Old timer named Tom O'Sullivan out of deep Florida or Mississippi or somewhere down there. I planted this seed in my head years ago. If you came to A for answers, you're in trouble. Because we don't have any answers here.

If you want an answer to your problem, just go out on the street of any old town. Stop any stranger. Tell them

what the problem is and they'll give you an answer. What we have here is a solution. And if you involve yourself deeply into the solution, you find your own answers. Now that's a cute way of saying the truth. Isn't that nice? Yeah. If I'm looking for answers to specific crises that I created, I'm going to make crisis centered forever.

I need a solution so I can find a way to live where I don't keep creating crisis. If you don't create them, you don't have to solve them either. Of course life gets kind of dull unless you do something else. So go out and find somebody who's busy in the crisis creating business. Play with them for a while. This is the solution. Here's another place where you can get off of this train. All the way through here, there's ways to get off.

Here's one. Almost none of us like the self searching, the leveling of pride, and the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. All three of those things are going to take place. All right. It won't get any results at all. Half measure bill is nothing. Halfway doesn't get half results. You either is or you isn't. This is a full-blown deal. The great fact is just this and nothing less.

Please don't settle for anything less than this because this is available here. We have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our created creator has entered into our lives and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.

Why would I want to settle for anything less than that? This stirred my soul from the beginning. It stirs me this moment. I hope it stirs you. Revolutionized, turned it around. Total change. That's what I'm looking for. I want to be the kind of person who can't do the kind of things that make me ashamed of myself. You notice we don't deal with guilt here? Isn't that funny? Don't get taken care of very easily. Guilt is when you caught me breaking one of your rules or standards.

And all I have to do is stand still and tell me what the penalty for that is. Pay it and it's over. Shame is when I've caught myself by any one of my rules or standards or principles. And there's no payoff. There's no punishment. There's no way I can take care of that. It just eats on me. It begins to erode my very principles. I do one of those things. I am less than less able to not do it next time. So I have to quit living by rules and start living by principles.

And this gets to be a bitch because the human condition and the human ego demands rules and regulations and standards. And what's the standard here? You're either sober or you're not. That's a good standard. There is no way to measure that. You either is or you isn't. A spiritual experience is a simple experience because it's a unifying thing. It's just the understanding that I'm you and you're me. We're not separated.

We're all children of the same God. We're actually kin in a very real way. We're different models. We'll chuck chamber on God, love him. One of the things I liked about Chuck is that the way he said things, if I'd have been there first that's how I would have said it. But he got there before I did, so I have to steal from him. And since he's dead, I can do that with impunity. He said this one time. He stirred my soul.

If God had made any two of us the same, one of us would have been unnecessary. Not lonely. That means that I have a contribution to make to life and I'm the only one that can make it. And you have a contribution to

make to life and you're the only one that can make it. I can't make yours and you can't make mine. What a wonderful thing. As far as I know there's never been another one like this one ever built. Completely unique.

Same gene pool has produced three different people from my mother and father. I raised twins once. Same embryo even. Split made two people. One boy, one girl, both different. Wonders thing. The fun thing about it is that if I don't make my, if I make my, don't make my contribution, life seems to go on anyway. It's not like it was that important to deal. But if I do make it, somehow the texture of life is enriching to some.

And that's worth doing. My contribution to life I used to think was going to get me in a history book somewhere. No, it's what's my contribution today. Sometimes it's to talk. Sometimes it's to listen. Sometimes it's just to stay home. I don't know what it's going to be. We don't know what God has in mind for me yet. We know what he had in mind for me yesterday and today. No idea what he has in mind for me tomorrow. I mean, I'll check with her first, but he made me decide that he needs me on Tahiti or Fiji.

I hope, but you never know. More probably I'll still be at Tanglewood in the morning. But I have a backup in cases needed. You still here? Okay. Andy, you still here? Okay, don't leave me, baby. So the question becomes, do you want that? If what we've learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creator, color, are the children of a living creator, with whom we may form a relationship on simple and understandable terms.

As soon as we're willing and honest enough to try, there's that damn willing again. All I have to do is be willing. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There's no friction among us over that. Yeah, I want that. I don't know what that is, but I want it to. And it plays out in different ways. This is an inner experience for me. We're being led to that by Bill.

Somebody's getting tired. See, there's an awful lot of stuff he's going over and over again. And I can quote this to you, but I want to read it to you so you know where to find it here. Part of our job as sponsors is not so much to give them the information, it's to show them where it is so when we're not there they have a reference. Well, I can power that's my dilemma. Well, we're on page 50. Bill's talking about the stories that people wrote, our stories, written or not.

What we're supposed to do is the people of Alcoholics Anonymous who have recovered flatly state this. Since they've come to believe in a power greater than themselves and to take a certain attitude toward that power and to do certain simple things, there's been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking. Revolutionary, completely the opposite. I used to be consumed with acquiring stuff, personalities, money, stuff.

I've never had anything. My life today is about giving it away as fast as I can and my wife will tell you my current frustration is I'm doing my best and it comes in faster than I get rid of it. It just gets to be a plague sometimes. Keep it coming, but I don't know where to put it. So I give it away and sure enough more shows up. Someone just gave me a pair of brand new, fine, H&H cowboy boots. And because of my neuropathy, I can't wear them.

So I gave them to a cowboy I know. And I didn't think ahead of time. The son of a bitch lives the same way I do. He's going to bring me back too. You just watch. He'll bring me back too. He describes a spiritual experience

again since we're going to have one. Let's look at it and see if we want it. In the face of collapsing despair and in the face of total failure with their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness, and sense of direction flowed into them.

When you become spiritually awakened, that is what happens. Those of you who are can testify to that. That's a simple deal. Have you had a sense of power? A sense of peace? A sense of happiness? A sense of direction? Then you're already awake. I'll talk for a second about happiness. There is no such thing as happiness. You're just going to have to learn and be happy without it. There's no such thing as happiness. You don't acquire happy.

You either are or you aren't. Life gets real simple. Watch this as the presence of God is today the most important fact of our lives. Now, over on page 53, we're moving toward this thing. I'm skipping a lot, but you're all experts anyway, so I don't have to worry about that. When we became alcoholics crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could neither postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or nothing.

We got either is or isn't. What's our choice to be? Isn't that a beautiful statement of the alcoholic ego? In utter desperation, I still have to make a choice as to whether God really is or isn't. How egotistical is that? It's also a statement of truth. Until I make that acknowledgement, it is of no use to me whether God is or isn't. I must make that acknowledgement. And the funny thing is that if God is, there's nothing to worry about.

And if God isn't, then not to worry about. The battle's over. True? Yeah, not to worry about. Grandma used to say, never sweat the small stuff. Everything is small stuff. Of course, she's dead now, so what does she know? So what is our choice to be? Let's consider that. Let's take a break. Just consider that. What's our choice to be? Either everything or nothing. And I can't explain with my mind what everything or nothing is.

This is a departure point. Either is or isn't. What's my choice to be? You want 15, 20 minutes? Please. For 11 years, I did an annual retreat at a monastery in Santa Barbara, California. With a group of young lunatics out of Los Angeles and Hollywood in Santa Monica. I love them dearly, but they're wack old. I remember the first one the sister came in to tell us about the rules of the order. She says, we have taken vows of poverty, chastity, and hard work.

For you guys, that means no money, no honey, and you don't get your own way. But in a re-gathering, sometimes it was difficult. One year we had a couple of professional singers that were there. They were sitting off to my right. And folks were just chitter-chattering. And I don't interrupt that. I think it's important. But they were anxious, kind of like Jack is. Get this show on the road. So one of them went, hmm, and as a reflex action partner.

And this gorgeous harmony went out over the room. Everybody got quiet because they had that kind of voice. So at the next re-gathering, they just did it again. And several people in the group joined in. Lovely. It sounded like a Hawaiian chorus. And I got this horrible picture of what was going to take place here. They would go back down into the LA area after this retreat with me and say, see what non-taught us. What's your choice to be?

I have no choice. God is. God is everything. I don't know what that means. But I can spend the rest of my life now looking for how that can be. For instance, in, I think it was about 92, late 91 or 92, hepatitis took me down. I've had it for probably 50, 60 years, but it got me. And it was one of those times when sometimes I couldn't time my own shoes. I couldn't move. There's no way to describe it to you, so I won't bother.

It's a bitch. And then they put me on an interferon to try to treat that. And that makes you sick on top of everything else. And it was almost times where I was getting the power of God like I've never had it before. A sick most of the time, except when I had God's work to do. I had a workshop I did every Tuesday morning at six o'clock, 45 minutes across town. I had to wake up about five and I'd be fine. When I'd drive out there, we'd do the workshop.

I'm fine. All the way home. I'm fine. I had talks and these things to do. And as long as I was busy at it, I was fine. Sometimes they had to help me to the airplane. Or I'd stay in the room for a while and have to rest. But that demonstration was going on. And some idiot came along one day, said if you were spiritually fit, this wouldn't have happened. And I bought that for half hour or so. But I did begin to wonder, because I know that everything in my life since I showed up here has been a gift in the truest sense, my very life.

And everything I have is a gift. I don't own things anymore. That's why I'm free. Everything you own owns you, you know. But I knew this was part of the gift and I just didn't understand how can this be part of the gift. That was truly baffled. And while this was kind of all going on at once, because it hepatitis brings on depression and interfere on compounds with depression. And I was in deep, deep depression. Which means a little bit of rage and anger here and fatigue here.

It couldn't feel any emotions if they were gone. The only emotions available were fear and anger. They were quick flash kind of things. Anyhow, I got to the workshop one morning wondering, in the back of my mind, how can this be part of the gift? And my friend Chuck Moore showed up when I was really amazed, because Chuck had died two years before. That's what I've been told of cancer. And this was a very lively looking ghost.

And after the meeting he took me aside. He had come to that meeting to 12 step me on how to survive interfering. Denying about hepatitis, but he had to interfere on. And he came to show me how to survive that. And in that conversation we had, I got it. If you have survived any terminal illness, and we have one, you must tell someone about it. There's no choice, you've just got to tell somebody. And you can't tell just anybody, because they're not going to get it.

So that day he was a gift to me, but I also realized I was a gift to him. Because he needed to tell somebody about this. And I was available. So little pieces of that truth about what is everything and nothing come along for the rest of my life is to begin to see how that fits together. There are things that go on on this planet that just stupefied me. I can't grasp them. But I'm wanting to accept it somewhere, somehow.

Within me, the spirit of God resides, and we'll work through this. So what's my choice to be? God's everything. Don't know what that is. When I was in school, we only had 16 or 18 recognized galaxies. Now there's billions and billions. This thing is so vast we can't even comprehend it. And yet I live inside of the creation that I can look out there. I'm fully aware that the light I'm seeing from that star is from something that isn't even there anymore.

It is so far away that it isn't even there, hold on a second anymore. It took millions of years to get that light far enough for me to see it. And I marvel at the creation that allows me to see that. And then it has a mind that understands what it's seeing. What a deal. This just all comes along later. It's not mountain top stuff, but that's big stuff. So when I look at the sky, I do not feel smaller. I feel larger than I am.

And when I am with you, I am larger than I am. You make me larger than I am. Because I am you and you are me. And if I am with you, I am larger than I am. Enough. Well there's everything that I need to associate myself with that. What do you think? Since that's what it's going to take to help me overcome alcoholism. I might just want to cooperate here and associate. So where am I going to look? I have already failed by looking out here.

I've looked out here as far as I can look. And I can see it, but I can't relate to it. I am not a mountain. I can see the mountain, but I'm not a mountain. When I'm page 55, I'm told. If God is everything and you want to develop a relationship with him on easy and understandable terms, deep down on every man, woman and child is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship, of other things.

And I love calamity. Your calamity is probably my entertainment. A good deal of comedy is based on somebody falling on their ass. And as long as it isn't me, it's funny. There are real calamities. And I need to match them with something other than my reaction to me feeling threatened. A real calamity calls for certainty here. Action here. Quiet here. The ability to respond to the genuine calamity. And we've had some.

My nephew, Jeff, one of my greatest teachers died when he was 16. For the whole family, that's a calamity. We knew he was going to. He had a very rare blood disease. Maybe what wasn't, honey, one in a million. But we knew it would take him. And he knew it would take him before he was 21. This kid lived all the way to 16. He was courage. He was here all the time. He got every minute out of this deal. And he and I became close.

One of the symptoms of this disease he had to stay out of the sun. And because it would do things to his skin. And at the time I was in the specially roofing business. I did commercial re-roofing. And that's what he wanted to be. I was one of his heroes. So we'd get him all buttoned down and take him up on a roof. And he just had a ball. And when he left it was a calamity. And I got to cry for the first time in my life for all the times I hadn't.

They had me do his funeral service. I got to be present for that. His dad didn't like me much. And that's just a fact. I never did anything to him. He just didn't like me that much. And all through that funeral all I'm doing is crying. But I don't know if you can talk and cry at the same time. And all I did was tell these people about this kid. And that's calling me with clarity of thought. And before he was over his dad actually came up and thanked me.

He didn't run things about his son. He didn't even know. That's not of my doing. It's of my willingness to be here now and to respond with clarity. Is that kind of the essence of that honey? She was there you know. Kick ass little kid. Set my medicine bag off with him so he wouldn't have to go along. He really loved that kind of stuff. Anyhow, so there are real calamities. But most calamities are the ones I make up. This soup just isn't hot enough.

They've ruined my life. They wouldn't give me the green ball. There's a calamity. For a five-year-old that's a genuine. My life is over. They've ruined it. Well, clarity there is to just sit still until she gets over it. If you tell

the boys, give her the ball and she will use that forever more. And by sitting there, one of the boys finally says, Jenna, come on down. I'll give you the ball. She got him. Pump. Oh, that one hurt.

That was me. Pump is where you have very little substance, skinny little person. And you've got to represent yourself as having much more than that, so you put on great huge robes with lots of fur collar, puffed sleeves, and you put on your majesty and you flow and you do motions and you say marvelous things in a marvelous voice. You even grant people the right to be wrong. That's how great I am. You may kiss my ring.

And inside just scrawny little thing. Just...