

Big Book Weekend

2003 | Part 6 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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I am, you may kiss my ring and inside this scrawny little thing just filled with pomp. I love pomp. I love pompous people. They are one of the few people I can pick on without any guilt whatsoever. You ain't pompous. You don't have what it takes to be pompous. I thought that's what you were getting at. No, no, no, pompous you're not. We have some other things we will talk about later. He's also a good dad. You notice that? This baby is sleeping next to this drunk for God's sake. This ne'er do well. Oh my. Anybody else here been pompous? Yes. The worst place we display that is at home in the criminal acts called raising children. That's usually a criminal activity the way most of us did it. Forcing my kingdom upon yours, you will do what I say. You will be what I want you to be.

You will behave this way. You are a reflection of me. That's a criminal act. So we don't do that here anymore. Neither will the people I sponsor and all with my children and grandchildren. Did you enjoy being pompous? That's pompous. Dismissal of you as a person. I disagree with you, but I don't have any way to counter your argument. So in today's world, it says whatever. Oh, somebody said that. It's not too long ago didn't I?

It just stops everything and by worship of other things. Oh my God. Money, power, cars, sex, work, worship. One of the funniest things I have ever seen was somebody who understood this, an all-on member who played it out on the floor where I worked. I worked for an organization. They got jobs for men coming out of prison, job counseling, setting things up, training, all that sort of stuff. So there'd be eight or ten of them sitting on a bench in the morning. And this little all-on named Paula, she was cute and vivacious and bouncy and irreverent and nearly pornographic in every move. It was just Paula. In a natural state.

And the boys that sit there and watch and just wonder, and we had an older Mexican counselor named Mercy Medina. And Mercy and Paula really genuinely liked each other. And Mercy had a sense of humor. And one morning when all the boys were sitting there, Mercy ran out and kneeled in front of Paula and said, thank you, Jesus, thank you. And she put her hand on his head and said, Mercy honey, I'd make a cripple out of you playing pompous as a game, because that's what it is. It's a game. Have some fun with all this. But those get in the way of my relationship with God. Can't tolerate pomposity. Can't tolerate worship of other things. And it isn't that there's a rule against it, but if I'm worshipping money, I can't worship the spirit. You can't serve two masters. That sounds like a rule. That's simply a statement of fact. You can't serve two masters. This whole deal is about all or nothing. And this is what was given to me. Thank God. They didn't pussyfoot with me. Okay? It's all or nothing. We finally saw the faith in some kind of God as a part of our makeup as much as the feeling we had for a friend. What do you think of that? Just as a general idea. Have you ever worshiped anything? Yeah. Tattoos. Yeah. They are demonstrations of who I am or how I think. These are my signs. I worship this to the point where I make a mark on me just to let you know. This is simple. I've been bit by something. Where is it? I'm biting back. This is me. This is Don. Isn't that funny? At 17, I was already getting to the place where I had to put my name on my arm so I wouldn't forget it. But you understand it. Worship of some sort. Yeah.

You had a hum. What was yours? Okay. How does that play out? Would you give your life for her? Yeah.

We make a mistake with that one sometimes. You know, greater love hath no man than to give his life for his brother. I used to think that man I'd be willing to die for you, which is only one aspect of it. The real truth of that one is I will give my life for you. I will do my living for you. That's what this is about. I will live my life as if it were your last day. Not as if it were my last day. It's quite a change. So you'd kind of like to stop drinking that, wouldn't you? Does that interfere with your worship of your daughter?

Yeah. Okay. I've been sober since she's been born. That's good. How long has that been? How old are you? Look at that. Somebody told me he was new. He didn't know. He's an old timer. No, and that's good. How about you? Have you worshiped anything along the way? Michigan. Alright, the alcohol. Yeah. Did you ever pray at the tube when the Wolverines were playing? Okay. No, it didn't sell as it sounds. Those are the things that whatever occupies my attention, whatever gives me the power, that is my God. That's what I'm worshipping. And we all go through that. That stands in the way. I can only serve one master. This is a bitch. This calls for some serious thought, doesn't it? I thought this was going to be easy. Come in and don't drink. Go to meetings. Sometimes we had to search for it, but it was there. It was as much a fact as we were.

We found the great reality deep within. And the last analysis is only there that he may be found. It was so with us. What a scary thing to present to somebody like me who had gone deep within and what he found he had to kill it. Thank God for the people who understand it. Like Bruce said, there's nothing in there that hasn't already killed you. And if we go in and face it and shine the light on it, it will go away. Got a great promise. God can't stand the vacuum so as I open up, it will fill me up. If I get rid of who I'm not, then I'll become who I am. It's automatic. I don't even have to look anymore. Is that an acceptable idea that this is deep within? It means casting out most of our old ideas. Most of us have been taught it's out here somewhere. Some nebulous place called heaven or whatever, or it doesn't exist at all. Or if it does, I don't want anything to do with it.

This casts all those ideas out. I'm going to go deep within. Would you like to try that journey? I mean, it's a little rigorous journey. It takes several weeks. You can awaken immediately with the journey to the quiet place. It takes a little bit of time because you got a lot of sludge to clear out of the way. So, okay, I've taken the journey before. I like it. I like to go back down to the beginning of the road and pick some guy up and bring him along with me. Make the journey all over again.

The journey is most of the fun in a jack. It's the journey. I thought the spiritual awakening meant it's over now. This is the end of the road. My favorite gospel, and I love gospel music. Oh, I didn't know that, but I love to sing those old gospel songs. Oh, Mahalia Jackson sang one that epitomizes my sense of my spirituality. The rusty old halo, skinny white cloud, or skinny white wings, and a robe that's so itchy it scratches.

A rusty old halo, a skinny old cloud, second hand wings full of patches, and that's kind of it. Okay, no more pomp, no more ermine. Just a skinny white cloud, and a robe that's so woolly it scratches. The end of you ever hear Mahalia Jackson sing? If you ever have the opportunity, just listen. She was the voice of God. It came right through her. She did to music what Jack Duster would. She carved away everything that didn't belong in a song, and then sang whatever was left with power and gusto. Oh, my, my, my, my, my, my, my.

So that's where we're going to go looking. As Bruce said, whom I drew near to, I mean, disclosed himself to us. How it works is an important chapter that we read so often we've forgotten how important it is. Its meaning

gets lost. It is the approach to the program. Rarely have we seen a person fail us, thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program. It's not a judgment. It's an observation. People who don't recover simply don't use the recovery process. That's simple. These are usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. Do any of you think that that you're constitutionally incapable of being honest with yourselves? Do you still think that?

Yeah. I used to think that I went, I went to Phil and tell him that. He says, well, that's the most honest statement you've ever made. So you're capable. They're not a fault. They seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Jeez, we've had a lot of meetings on what is rigorous honesty. We're so funny. We either spend our meeting time talking about things we don't know anything about or we dissect things that are very simple. Rigorous honesty means rigorous honesty.

What does that mean? Rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those two who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders. But many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. I am one of those. Grave emotional and mental disorders. To the point where competent authorities properly diagnose me. A psychopath is a person that doesn't know the difference between right and wrong so you can't help them. A sociopath is a person who does know the difference between right and wrong. They just don't give a damn. So you can't help them. And I was that second.

A type two, whatever that means. I don't know what a type one is but I don't need it. Grave emotional and mental disorders. But to recover if they have a capacity to be honest. Have you conceded to your innermost self yet that you are alcoholic? That's as rigorously honest as you need to get to begin the path. That's the first step in recovery. To concede to my innermost self that I am indeed alcoholic and that being the case there is no treatment for it. I am doomed to either live a miserable life or drink myself to death without spiritual aid. That's the deal. Is that okay with you? Good. Well he just sent you an angel.

He sent me three of them. They were ugly except for Bruce. Then I'm told how to present myself again I'm being taught. Our story is disclosing in a general way what we used to be like, what happened and what we are like now. Now that's pretty clear. Sometimes I hear people talk about what it was like, what happened and what it's like now and it confuses me a little bit because it isn't the definition. The drama is a good backdrop for what it is, what was I like, what happened and what am I like now. And for me and this is not a please not a condemnation but you asked me to share my life with you. I would never ever think of taking a personal problem to an AA meeting. I can't think of anything silly here for me to do. I go in with a problem and there's 20 of you here. I leave with 21 problems. Now what am I going to do? There are people that we sometimes call sponsors or advisors. They get that because they will show me a solution. They won't try to give me an answer. They'll show me a solution which is always the same. Have you prayed about it yet?

Jesus, why do I call him? What I do take to meetings is what I was like when I had the problem. What happened to me and what I might now that I don't have the problem because there may be somebody there with that problem and it takes all three. If all I came to AA and heard were war stories, what would I stay here? I know all about that. I mean I think they're amusing and I think they're vitally important for identification but

they're better me more than that. I want to know what happened to you. How come it is you don't drink anymore and Bruce and Phil and Roy would tell me that and now what are you like? I've changed. What am I like today? You've been with me over the weekend part of the time. I'm a mouthy opinion and an old man. If you want to take that. Brian thinks I'm cute but Brian is very astute so it goes far beyond that. Fact number one is that I have been continuously sober, alcohol-free for a little over 35 years. That's part of who I am. New people need to know that. You may not want what I have but you may want that and that's a possibility. I am living hope and so are you. We kind of worked him over on the street. It wouldn't be the first time.

More better we thought let's bring him here among all of us. Maybe he can gather hope just from seeing the numbers of people living this way that are laughing and eating and having fun and really getting something out of life. Let me offer you something here. This book I get tickled with this. Bill and Dr. Bob used to sit down at a kitchen table with some of the boys and count noses because most alcoholics don't make it. After about three years they were count noses will not realize they had 40 people doing essentially the same thing that were staying sober for a long period of time like six months and seven months. Some of them even two and three years. This is a big deal. It doesn't happen. We better write a book about that. By the time they got it down to we're about 100 roughly.

I have heard people say well only 77 but Bill liked even numbers. Whatever the hell that truth doesn't matter. The fact is there are more people in this room today than we're in all of alcoholics anonymous. The night they decided they better write this book. Is that powerful? It just knocks me through a loop. Man what a deal. And both of them die sober by the way. If you decide you aren't what we have and are wanting to go to any length to get it then you're ready to take certain steps. We had hundreds of meetings on particularly midnight meetings at York Street on what does any lengths mean? It means any lengths. What we spent meetings talking about that was important is what possible lengths are there that we wouldn't go to but it just means any lengths. Whatever. You owe me to push peanuts down broadly with my nose. If that'll keep me sober I'll do it. You have to convince me that it'll keep me sober because I don't humiliate myself before anybody. I'm one of God's kids. But I'm wrong. If you can show me a good reason to do it I'll do it. If it'll make my granddaughter laugh I'll do it in the flash. Oh please protect me from a five year old. She could get me to do anything. We thought we could find an easier softer way but we could not. With all the earnestness that I commend we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas but the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Nail means nothing. You get no results at all by holding on to anything. Have you noticed that with new people? One of the ways that gets displayed that sponsors need to watch for is suddenly around the fourth step you don't hear from them anymore. And then six months later they come back for the second time and wonder why it didn't work.

I used to start them at the beginning and go through assuming we missed something. The last two I've had to did that I won't let them do that. They were in the middle of inventory finishing. We're not going to do a one two three dance for the next 10 years. Finish this. And when we finish the whole process if you need to we'll go back and do the whole thing again. I haven't heard from either one of them. They don't like that idea. They want somebody to do the dance with them. One of them called me and this sounds cold and hard but I think it's loving.

Well I do. I want him here so bad. I want him to die as soon as possible so we can get here quicker. If I prop him up I can keep him alive for years in desperation. I don't want to do that. He drank at 11 years sobriety. His

sponsor had done something that he didn't much like and he got a little resentment toward his sponsor and then his sponsor died before he got it cleared up. And he drank. His sponsor was his higher power. Of course he drank.

And he had a low grade resentment that really made him mad how dare he die before I get a straight note. And he drank. And he kept drinking and kept drinking. He finally got to me several years later. And we kind of looked at his life. He was a holistic chiropractor. Now I want to show you how God works. I went to one once because of the neuropathy. We're looking at I've got chronic pain and I just I get tired of it sometimes and we're just looking at solutions and they wanted me to take some adrenal cortex compound. It sounded like a good thing till I read the label. 80% alcohol. And I looked at all the rest of their little remedies. 80% alcohol. What's the base? So that's out for me. So he and I discovered something as we chatted.

He was taking his own medications for certain problems he had. The reason he couldn't stop drinking is that he never stopped drinking. Okay. And then pretty soon he'd go to drinking. But he'd been drinking the whole time. Didn't even know it. And the craving was on him. Anyway, we got all that done. He called me. We had a good third step. He was getting ready to write inventory. He was actually getting started. Had a list made and got a couple columns written and then disappeared and right after Christmas called me and said I drank over the holidays.

What should I do now? And I pray when I get questions like that. I don't know what to say. There's no rules on that. What does he need? And I prayed and I heard myself say to him this, go drink. Drink until you understand that you cannot not drink. Then call me back. And he's called me once, but he was drinking. He hasn't discovered yet that he can't not drink. Sounds harsh, but I'm there. I'm ready. Any time he calls, I'm ready. But until he comes to that, he hasn't conceded to his innermost self that he can't, that he's alcoholic. What can I do for him?

Nothing. And I don't want to spoil a future opportunity. The time comes that he finds that, he will call me because he can trust me enough to call me and we'll go to work. He may die before that. I don't know. I do know that I can kill him if I just keep putting up with him. Don't take that as a rule. There are other guys that I just nurse and nurse and nurse. I nursed Chuck for over a year before he got anything done. He was so badly wounded, that's what he needed. Remember, we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful without helping us too much for us.

But there is one who has all power. That one is God. May you find him now, right now. Find him right here, right now. If you'll get right here right now, you will find him because that's where he exists and he's everything. Okay. And you probably won't fall in your chair. One third step, we did have an epileptic seizure. But I think that would have happened anyway. This is a rather uptight person that was getting ready to do it anyhow.

Just pick that time for dramatic effect. I don't know. Half measure the bill is nothing. That's a harsh, harsh piece of truth. Half measure don't get me half sober. Half measure the bill mean nothing. There's no need to even start this unless you're going to finish it. It's what that says to me. Don't even start it unless you're going to finish it. Because this is rigorous, this is not easy. This is really tough stuff we're about. It takes the power of God to get me where I can even look at myself for goodness sakes. But then in kind of honesty, I can't do it alone.

I can't get rigorously honest. Then they go through the steps to tell us exactly what we're faced with. And our response is automatic. What an order I can't go through with that. Making a man looks pretty scary when you're not even sure that you've done anything wrong after all was their fault. One of my favorite things when I'm working with inmates in therapeutic situations is to just ask somebody who brought you here. The judge, the sheriff, the marshals, will go through a cell and have I ever had anyone say, oh, I did. But that's where we go.

I want to get through this part because I get tired of this technical stuff and I want to tell more stories. What an order I can't go through with it. Well, don't be discouraged. No one among us has been able to achieve anything like perfect inheritance to these principles. We're not saints. The point is we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down here are guides to progress. And we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

It's very important for me to learn that. I thought you go from sick bad guy to a spiritual fine guy. It's all, then I'd get my little old coat with the leather patches on the elbow, my little place up near evergreen at the side of the lookout monitor. And I would listen to Mozart and Beethoven during the day out on the patio I had just outside the French doors and dispense a little wisdom to the peasants as they passed by. Beloved by all.

No, the crap we think of. Our description of the alcoholic, which we have spent quite some time describing, the chapter to the agnostic and our personal ventures before and after, make clear three pertinent ideas. One, where alcoholic cannot manage our own lives. Second, probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. And third, God could and would if he were sought the other time to get off the trainer to go back when I'm working with people and see what we missed. Because the next thing says, being convinced, we were at step three.

If we are not convinced in those three propositions, we need to spend some more time getting convinced. Are you all convinced? Can you run your own life? Can you not drink? Can you run your own life? Not while drinking. Which is by the way, what you do best, right? Is that what you do best, drinking? No. Is that what you do most? You do it really well. Do you ever do it when you don't want it? Yes. Okay. That's good enough for a starter. That's good.

Do you think you can stop by yourself? Actually, I tried once. 10 months spent drinking one. Do you? Yeah. That's a good stretch. Following my peyote invasion, I lived in the woods for four months. That's the only way I could do it too. The minute I got to San Francisco, I got drunk. Yeah. And no wonder I like you. I'll manage my life. I'll go live with the animals. Do you think you're alcoholic? Yes. Can you manage your own life?

No, not today. Not today. Well, this is the only one you got. Do you think any of us can relieve your alcoholism? Relieve it for me now. No, good. He's not filled with illusion. You're right. We can't. Alona collected what we can't. The next proposition is the one are you convinced that God couldn't would if he were soft? I'm sorry. God could and would if he were soft? Yeah. That's the more difficult part of the process.

Well, it doesn't say found. It doesn't say found. It does not say God was found. He says, yeah, we leave it in the seeking. Are you willing to seek? Yes. That's why I'm here. Good. That's a straight answer. Good. He's yours now, Brian. Oh, you poor thing. No, we can move forward. We're now at step three. I'm willing to seek. I understand. I can't do it. I understand. You can't do it. So I'm willing to seek deep within myself to see if I can

find a power greater than myself within myself that can relieve my alcoholism.

If that's what you want, then we're step three. It's no more complicated than that. Well, I wish I lived here. I really like to sponsor you, but I don't. So I'm going to turn you over to Adolf over here. No, actually, we're making some fun of that. Brian's the one to found him. Right? On the street. All right. On the street in Camden, Brian found him. Is that right? No wonder he looks scared when we walked up to you.

It's them. They've been following me all over town. Oh, you're dear to my heart. Six years ago, it was Jim. Same place. Wild eyes. Totally psycho. Thank you for letting me love you. Thank you. Yeah. Well, being convinced we're step three, which is we decided to turn our life over the care of God as we understood him. So what do we mean by that? And just what do we do? Then Bill goes through this wonderful thing about the actor, which really pulled my chain because that's me.

Have any of you run through this piece before? Briefly, as we make this approach, and this is particularly pertinent, selfishness and self-centeredness, that we think is the root of our troubles. Are we convinced of that? Okay. Our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They rise out of ourselves. We must be rid of this selfishness. If we don't, it kills us. It often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without God's help.

I can't do it. You can't do it. I can't use self to get rid of self. Can't solve the problem with the problem. Neither could we wish. Reduce our self-centeredness by wishing it away. They had to have God's help. He gives us a couple ideas about images for God. God the Father, the, the, where is agents and all that sort of thing. I had a little trouble with the Father thing, but I had time to run that through. My sponsor encouraged prayerful contemplation as well as meditation.

In here there's an admonition that don't let your prejudice deter you from asking what spiritual terms mean to you. And I realized most of them don't mean a thing to me. I've been stealing them all my life. But what does this mean? Father, why am I so upset with my dad? Because my dad is truly a lovely man. He was not perfect, but he was a good man. He was there all the time. He provided for the family. He taught us things. He exposes us to life.

He'd pull us out of school sometimes because he thought we'd learn more where we were going than we would in school. When we take our lessons with us and we go to Carl's bed or somewhere where we had an experience. He was fun. He was playful. He was a musician. He, one day he came out. A bunch of us were getting tricky with our bicycles. My dad came out just as an alert, got on it backwards, sat on the handlebars facing the wrong directions and rode off.

Incredible. But I was pissed at it. And I discovered why in that quietness of my own heart, I know deep within me is the fundamental idea. I know what Father means. Not as a gender thing, but as a principle. God the Father. I know what that is. And my dad didn't match up. No human being can. I'm asking things to him that are beyond his ability to give me. I was pissed because he didn't give me what I needed at five. Well, nobody could have for goodness sakes. I was a demanding little shit. Plus the fact that I'm no longer five and I don't need that anymore anyway. Gotta get off his back. A number of things occurred. But mainly, I knew what the truth was and he didn't match it. Shame on me. My dad and grandpa were the head of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan in the late 20s and early 30s. So we had some funky ideas in our house for a while.

And they both awakened spiritually and spent the rest of their lives straightening that up. They took their robes off somewhere in the 30s. I left their robes on them for years after that. That's what we do. And that's some of the truth that came out of just this basic idea. Okay. That he had done the very best he could of what he had. As far as I was concerned, that wasn't enough. It doesn't matter. He'd done the best he could. And so would I. At least mine was there all the time. I'm in a penitentiary cell and my kids are in a foster home. Maybe I ought to get off his back inside me and getting off his back got me off of my back. I've done the very best I could. And this is where I am. Maybe I better try something to do. Because my way doesn't work. It's a wonderful little thing. And where are his children?

Didn't know it then. But what a lovely idea that is. Think about that. What is it that children are supposed to do most of the time? Play. And we take it so seriously. Play and sleep and eat. Well, if I'm one of God's children, maybe I need to learn how to play. And I have. I really have learned how to play. You know where I learned it? Children. But adults don't know how to play. They've forgotten. One of the guys I sponsored. Brilliant, brilliant man. He's now a millionaire.

We don't hear much from him because he's just, he's out there somewhere. But when we got, he's the one that gave me a, after 10 hours of listening to his fist step, I'm dying. He's just, the juice is gone. And I said, man, we got to stop. So I climbed up on his bed and went to sleep. Woke up two hours later and he's still going at it. He put a long tent step on my answering machine once. I wasn't there. He didn't care. But he came to me one day and he said, sadly, he said, I need to have you teach me how to play. I don't know how to play. Dad never showed me. I had no brothers. I've been serious my whole life. Would you show me how to play?

So we took him up to Estes Park and took him go-kart writing to start with. That's where boys ought to start on a go-kart with a governor on it so nobody can get hurt. Okay. What he didn't know is that we'd made arrangements because we did the roof on this place that if one of us asked, they'd take the governor off our cart. But we had a lot of fun. We began to learn to play. Took him fishing. Took him skiing with me. I didn't go skiing for the first time.

Well, the second time, the first time I was skiing I was 16. Some kid fell down right next to me on her his leg go snap. And I went road to toboggans the rest of the day and didn't go back till I was 50. So I'm a recreational skier. I really like green slopes. If there's a mogul on it, I don't want to see it. I just like to. You know, I'm the one that the first three times up was embarrassed because some tiny little boy should go- On your left. And some tiny little kid would go shoostin' by me. I fell down once and this little creature about so big said, you all right, mister? But I've only fallen a couple times. They don't like falling. My kids took me up there and taught me to ski. They took me to the very top and they said, Bob, there's only one way down. And then throughout the day, each one of them would trade off hanging with me. Well, I learned how to get down off of that mountain. And they told me, use your fear. I'm afraid I'm going to fall. Well, that's what skiing is. It's falling down a mountain. It's just that you control the fall. But you are falling. Make no mistake about it.

And if you don't control it, you're going to run into a tree or another skier or something. Anyway, I'm going to run into skiing. From the recreational skill, Paul got serious about skiing. And he stopped playing. He started doing mobile jumps and all this shit and I lost him as a playmate. So I had to go find me another one. I've got one now that's a fishing buddy. He's a former, well, he worked for the Parks Department Colorado. And he knows all

good fishing holes. And I'm letting him teach me how to fish. It's like playing cribbage.

Show me where it is. I know how to get it. We're children. Children live with a sense of, ah, and so do I. The longer I live with a sense of the presence of God in my life, and the more I do spiritual things, the more I am because the less I know. This is incredible. We spent a good part of Thursday just sitting on Brian's porch. Brian is such a kind man. He let me sit on his porch. Just looking at Maine. Do you know how stunning the place is where you live? You have water.

Lots of water in green trees and rolling hills and the earth smells and I just am stunned by your state. I will go back to mine because that's where I belong. But I sure did enjoy this one. I'm in awe. How can all this be going on here? And I want to develop that sense more and more and more. Part of why I can talk to you is that you know I'm not talking down to you. I know you're scared. I know you're nervous. I know you're baffled and so am I and you know that.

And we'll just, we'll get through this thing together. And so we develop that trust because I'm not an adult. I don't know how he doesn't know. But I know him and he knows me and we both have to go to dad with him. I had to tell you one thing. We'll jump. Do you want to take the third step now or you want to do it later this evening? It will help me time it. Okay. I want to tell you one last hang up I had to get rid of. My first sponsor became a talking in tongues reborn Christian.

My two best friends on the street and my first street sponsor became reborn talking in tongue Christians. I made myself available to the experience and it just hasn't happened for me. And I went through a period of time where I thought there must be something wrong with me. And one of my best friends made that same shift. So I started Bible studies and I followed Dick grand around and would ask him questions and I truly made myself available. It just didn't happen that way to me. But Jim Ellis and I were doing Bible studies and Jim stopped at the sixth week we got together. He says we're going to stop this. I have come to understand that you love Jesus as much as I do. I don't want to fool with that. I didn't know what that meant but I took his word for it. Before I got unconfused a very dear friend of mine truly spiritual woman. This woman is on a mission for God and has been for years that manifests this way. There was a time she had worked to do so she couldn't work and she had no money and she had no gas in her car but she drove it for four months anyway. People put a rag and nothing in there. I don't pretend to understand it. I just know she had a mission to take care of and she had transportation.

Anyway I was talking to her about this and whether it's Jesus or Buddha or whatever it is that last piece. I told her how confused I was and how willing I was and what am I doing wrong? She says nothing. She says understand this and this was a Christian woman. She says I love Jesus dearly. But there are times when I have to go to him and say Jesus honey I really love you but I need to talk to Dad. It was consistent with the experience I've had and put some words on it and freed me up from that. So whatever it may be there's freedom in the way we do this.

I suggest that you consider this as a viewpoint. In all spiritual activities there are some similarities religious ceremonies or whatever. The first thing that occurs is an invocation which means somebody invokes the name of God. They acknowledge the presence of God. I'm disturbed by some things I see in a day where I hear some chairpersons say let's invite God in. Hey he's already here. You don't need to do that. I need to acknowledge the

presence. If I wanted to talk to Jack I'll say Jack and that isn't a demand for his attention. That's my recognition that Jack is here and I am now ready to communicate if you have time. It's an invocation. Speak the name out loud.

Speak the word. Then there is a prayerful ceremony where we say what it is we're here for. What are we going to do? What's this activity about? Then we do whatever that is. And at the end of all that there's a name in which closes that spiritual activity and we go on to something else. So I look here to see does that fit here and it certainly does. Here at the third step the first thing it says is God. Okay I'm acknowledging the presence of God. I'm about to talk to it. Then I ask what I'm here for. I offer myself to lead to do with me and build with me as I will. Relieve me of the bondage of self. Take away my difficulties. There's some thing I ask for. And then I look for the amen and it ain't there. And I go on through looking some more and there's some stuff about inventory and house cleaning and willingness. There's all kinds of things. And then there's another prayer that looks kind of like this one. Only it seems to have teeth in it. We call it the seventh step here. I'm letting out you can have all of me. And at the end of that one is an amen.

So I have concluded and act as if everything from the word God here on page 63 to the amen at the end of the seventh step prayer is all part of the same prayer. Prayer now becomes action and activity. And I'm involved in it. It becomes a living thing. It's not just something in my head. Which also means that during this activity I'm spiritually protected. I have the aid of God. I offer myself to the take away my difficulties. Well that's what the inventory helps me do.

Really me and the body yourself. That's what the house cleaning helps me to do. That's a viewpoint that I offer you. Those who have done it that way with me and I didn't do it that way the first time. This has come to me since. Have been 100% successful because they've been able to go into the deep dark places of the mind without fear because they're going in with light and they're trusting their God and they trust that this will actually occur. So with that in mind we're going to eat at six.

Looks like you started already. I love him too but I haven't had a chance to pick on him yet this weekend. Oh that's all right I need that. So if you wish then we will say the third step prayer and then we'll take a nice long break and have a lobster pig out. If you would like we can get back together later this evening or if you would prefer we can do it in the morning. What's your choice? I don't mind. Okay we're going to eat at six. What time are we going to get back together?

seven thirty eight. What's your plan here? Eight o'clock because I've been to this lobster pig out before. It's going to take till nine or eight just to wash up. Let's say till eight o'clock. So we'll take this third step prayer and I'll then if you wish. I'm ready. She's ready. If you're ready join us if you're not ready. It doesn't matter. We'll see you at eight or before. Absolutely. My experience of that third step of the group has always been very gentle. Did you find that pleasant? That's one of the consistent experiences that I have in the spiritual realm is it's pleasant. There's a gentleness and kindness about it. Tell you what I've disposed this evening to just sit and chat. We've got a lot of technical stuff to do and and I'm tired of technical for the moment. We'll do it if that's what you wish. But I'd rather just chat and visit and see because we're going to be here in the morning too and this is not the definitive big book study of all time. We have now entered into the realm of the spirit and so just like myself to make myself available to you at this moment, particularly to you newer people, whoever you may be because

having just entered the world of spirit, what's it feel like to you at the moment? Yeah, that's a good word. It's intense, pleasantly intense for me. Yeah, that's a different experience isn't it?

Welcome. Huh? Welcome. Welcome experience. Yeah, I expect so. I'll tell you a couple of stories about that third experience with groups where you figure out what we're going to do next. I do really love the Santa Monica bunch at the retreat center up in Santa Barbara because they are consistently loony. They're also lovely, lovely people and one of those we had a long discussion as we led up into the third step. We're a couple hours kind of getting there and I let them run and have their heads so we could make the decision. We'd had a couple times before that and what was coming out of the group was a certain fanatic, un-gentle but intense, big book and everything had to be just right and so everybody had to be really ready to take this. After about two hours we said the third step prayer together and as soon as we got up to the people said well that didn't count because I didn't renovate it.

I thought well okay so we played for another hour and we took a break and came back and I said I'm going out in the garden and said the third step prayer and if any of you'd like to come join me do and it was all over they all came it was done but the most powerful one I've ever experienced was the very first one. This particular monastery retreat center has a silence rule it's just rules of the house from 10 o'clock at night until after breakfast in the morning no talking to anybody for any reason whatsoever it's just silence and I couldn't have timed it if I had tried but on Saturday night just before 10 the group reached the third step prayer we spent a half hour deciding whether to sit, stand, kneel, you know find everybody knelt except one guy he wouldn't kneel for anybody it didn't matter just as we finished the prayer the bell rang nobody could even get up and say wow they didn't take that into silence all night with I want an incredible experience because these are alcoholics and they were up most of the night learning new ways to communicate without talking you know meeting a hall and it was wonderful to watch it and the brothers loved it and the group learned some really important things about communication there are other ways and sometimes it's good just to go into the silence had one occasion in North Carolina when we came to the third step as a group one fellow said this is an intensely private and personal thing for me and I would rather not join the group and he stood outside the group to get his own thing it didn't mess with the energy in the room at all it really didn't matter and what I'm trying to say is that I like to submit to the conditions the big book laid out just do it the way it says but there is no right way there's no way to judge this is a spiritual activity and will occur when it's time for it to occur no sooner no later I have to do a submit to it that's the word we don't like you know submit Bob White gave us that he said all we really do here is comply with the conditions it's all we have to do comply with the conditions and the conditions are set forth here for this experience if you want a different experience you do something different that's all Bob said the last real decision that I ever made was the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God and from that point on all I've had to do is make the choice between whether I like red or green best and open my mind I'm talking to you briefly about the people that had profound effect on my life I come from the brand of AA where it was expected that you have a profound effect on everybody the minute you meet him David's down in Texas that that's still talked about we should step each other every time we meet not just a quick how are you but a genuine how are you and none of this oh how are you really I'll hurt you did you did you meet Bob dinner did you know Bob I have a letter from our Bob White was one of the early giants of Alcoholics Anonymous this man's influence has been felt widespread gentle big old Texan call everybody sugar he grabbed me one time after a little talk down Lake Whitney big tall fella grabbed me by the shoulders and looked in my eyes he said sugar you are pure d

wonder and I knew at the moment I really was because Bob said so I have a letter from the Denver one of the early Denver groups 1946 a letter written by one of their members to a group in Colorado Springs apologizing for Bob's behavior as he passed out of town it seems that the Denver group had had a meeting with Bob about Bob and it was decided that he was no longer an AA member and it was a charge because of conduct unbecoming a member of Alcoholics you haven't lived very long and expressing the hope that their meetings would now be much more peaceful and apologizing for more Robbins because his Bob Bob left town he stopped by their group and invited several of the members out for a drink later he became one of the finest and most influential AA members ever just because he was sweet when he called you sugar you knew you really were Bob talked about his initial call Bob was a bad drunk and he ended up in a shack out in the middle of West Texas something like 350 miles from the nearest help and three guys from a group in Dallas I guess it was somewhere up in there traveled that entire distance because they had heard he was out there he didn't call anybody they knew about Bob and they knew he was out there and he knew he was dying and he said all he can remember for several days was he'd come out of his coma and somebody be sitting there with him and all they'd see is we understand Bob we understand that's all he did what he remembers is that they were there didn't have a drink from that point on struggle so we learned from that about our heritage any any group of people it doesn't remember its heritage probably don't have much of a future either they will get inventive man this is the last place we ever want to get an advantage Wesley Parrish was another one of the old giants by the way any any social movement needs giants at the beginning these are extraordinary people who are set apart have great personal power and mammoth egos and they're needed because they're starting a social movement and they just need to move stuff and they face incredible odds and God's hands those egos are just fine if they all had them then a social movement we are one no longer needs giants we reach a point where we need leaders no more giants we need leaders now people who are of the movement and are willing to lead and Bill describes those kind of people who's the kind of people hey leaders are the kind of people who can put plans and ideas into action in such a way that the rest of us want to support them and help them because most of their ideas came from listening to us so we can support them and they're presented well and we're in that time now we need strong leadership in alcoholics and Anonymous we are bordering on the permissive instead of open we're beginning to begin to be permissive which will lead to disillusion because permissive is unprincipled we don't want to close the doors to anybody who really needs help but there's without something something going on that's real a real message that can hold these people it's just permissive you've been to some of those needs I actually heard a kid he was profane and talking garbage and an old member stopped him and he said just shut up old man this is a yeah I can talk about anything I want to you and he got that idea from us you know but old west perish was one of the giants west was probably the second homeless man I've ever seen in my life about top 280 pounds four foot six in every direction bald big ears and eyes that would make you just fall in love and a silver tongue devil was west perish did you meet west oh man I figure David knew everybody but west touched my heart at depth in a talk he gave one time where he described his first participation in spiritual things he was unable to grasp any of that early on and he was struggling but he wanted to stay sober he'd been a fisherman on the high seas he'd done a number of things he really wanted to stay sober he was NAA he wasn't identifying much but he heard a lady one time give a talk and it was a spiritual talk and something clicked in him and he knew she had something he needed and wanted so he called her and asked if he could come over and he went over and she was out in the kitchen cooking and she said west just wait there in the living room for a minute I'll be through here in just a minute and he went in and waited and he set up on the wall was that great huge painting that lovely painting of the fisherman guiding his boat in a gale and the great

master is standing behind him with a calm look on his face and his hand on the shoulder west called the prince of peace he said he's looking at that he'd been in gales and both both of them had a look of utter peace and tranquility in the midst of all this chaos and he said something hit him he never did talk to the lady he was driving a little delivery truck a little one-seat delivery truck he said he got a little old empty apple crate put it in the seat next to him the space next to him that was where the prince of peace would sit and as he drove around town he talked to him about everything he'd never been able to talk to anybody about and began to have his awakening of course then he just thought he talked to everybody in the world but those are the kind of things that stirred my soul at the beginning here were real people worldly indeed we talked in depth about talking to the prince of peace on an apple crate I can get that I can't get solid high mass I don't get it I'm not there with it I love it but I don't have the interaction I didn't do it I want to be like them these were men and I know you've met some they were kind of people that when they walked into a room things changed they didn't have to say anything they'd walk in and things would change and it was generally the room would get peaceful because these men were peaceful that's who they were they were at peace and that's what they brought into the room with them and the room responded to that you know I know we've all met angry people when they walk in the whole room changes okay and I want to I would like to be one of those not for myself but because I remember how I felt when I first saw these people and it made me feel I'm okay this is a good planet to be on this is the kind of beings we can produce and those aren't thoughts I can put words on them today those are feelings they touched me at a level but beyond the level of words or physical touch I just knew sugar you're a puree wonder is anybody ever done that for you I've been trying to do it all weekend sugar you are a puree wonder look out for this boy it's true Jim Griffin was 26 years sober when I met him former trustee and a gentle gentle man big fella I don't know why but the bigger they are the gentler they seem to get in my experience Jim took me on a 12 step call with him one time classic thing it was one of those little houses up in North Platte, Nebraska little house behind the house it was more of a garage converting into a shed and then made into a bedroom and our prospect was in there and it was a mess and it was a bullet hole in the wall and this guy was classic he was on the bed because he couldn't even get out to go to the toilet I mean he was stunned and he was just coherent enough that we began to chat with him and I followed Jim's lead he kind of made it a chat and we talked about alcohol as well and about ourselves and we spent an hour or so and Jim said to me I'll keep talking to him I'll be right back and left and a few minutes later came back in with a pint of whiskey and stopped me and handed the man a bottle of whiskey and said we sure do thank you for let us come and buy today would you mind if we stop by again someday we have to go now I'm shocked and we get out and I ask him what was this all about he said it was pretty clear the man did not want what we had to offer today and he was getting ready to go into severe dt's and convulsions and we have no right to take away the only medicine that might keep him alive until morning we get another shot at him I learned about uh love and compassion yeah these are the kind of things that have moved me in my AA life hmm I'm sorry yeah oh okay I'm really listening and then it was Reid Edgar we're people who normally not mix if you notice not even in the bars most of the time and there's all kinds of people in this room I wouldn't drink with it's just also a lot I would but you'd have to be good at it to keep up you young ones wouldn't have a chance it isn't that I drank more than you spill it's just I drank and when it's time to quit the hell you say I have these little yellow tablets here guaranteed to make this drunk last at least two more days yeah I don't know somebody you could keep up for about a week yeah you'd make me tired but I never let you know that Reid used to come down the penitentiary meeting and this was a stock broker type or an advertising man three three-piece suit with the best very dignified and polished gentleman and his wife was also the same these were people that had real

genuine class and Reid touched me deeply at one point we had a kid come in from the outside and give probably one of the best AA talks I've ever heard to this day I don't remember a word he said but I know I was moved and touched but we never saw him again Reid would come in once a month when it was his turn regularly and I came to trust Reid because he was regular he was demonstrating what I wanted to become on time able to keep a commitment just just there didn't often talk much except during the break when we just chat with him and I trusted Reid enough that the chances were pretty good I was not going to get out I owed the federal government five years and it was a parole violation and I was pretty sure I was going back to the federal penitentiary and I didn't mind I was now spiritually awake and I could say some of those poor wretches down there too you know the ego still goes toward I was prepared to go back I really didn't mind but there was a chance and I asked Reid at the last meeting we came to I said Reid because you guys kept saying on your first night out come here and you'll probably be able to stay out don't hang your AA on the gate on the way out make a meeting your first night out and I asked Reid how do you suppose I'm gonna be accepted out there because I still didn't feel you know I'm a year and a half sober now I've been through the steps I've been conducting the 12-step study school I'm pretty fit but I don't know how to live out there how am I going to be accepted and he said well why don't you come find out you come to York Street your first night out and I'll promise you this one of us who's been coming down here will be there to meet you that's a pretty wild promise because we didn't know when I was going to show up but say he knew one of them would there's always somebody around well my first day I was one of those remarkable