

Big Book Weekend, location undetermined

2003 | Introduction | Reading edition

FORMAT	DURATION	RECORDING ID
Transcript PDF	00:58:24	DP-2003-WORKSHOP_01

Automated draft. Timestamps have been removed for readability. Names, specialized terms, and unclear passages require human review.

[Listen to the original audio source](#)

Transcript

Timestamp-free reading edition | Automated draft; human review required

My name is Don, I'm an alcoholic. I'm already uncomfortable because I don't like the setup of the room. That's the way it is. If you don't either, because this isn't a lecture, give some thought as to how we might rearrange this. We can't possibly get a circle, which is the ideal because it's the only real thing there is is full circle. But perhaps there are some things we can do at the break or something that will rearrange it so we can get closer to each other. More people can see other people's eyes. If we can do that, we'll do it and if we can't, well, we just can't. I don't like this at all. I promise you this will be gone pretty soon. I don't know what we'll do with the microphones. Just take me to our shoulders or something. There, that's all we're ditching. I'm going to do for the week. No, it's not.

No, but from here on, it's going to be subtle, Jerry. Did you hear it, Tom? Yeah. I am an alcoholic. I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous that had been continuously sober since December 26th of 1967 because there is a God. No other reason. My home group is a little group known as NA Group. That's how we're registered. In naming the group we saw in the long form of the third tradition that said that any two or more alcoholics gathered for sobriety may call themselves an A group. So that's what we call ourselves. We're not smart, but we're cute. Our central office was not going to allow us to register under that name. They said, you can't do that. And then we reminded them who works for who and we're registered that way. One of the things we'll probably cover this weekend is who is here.

Who is responsible for this deal? Because it's you and me. We're totally responsible for everything that happens in Alcoholics Anonymous because we are Alcoholics Anonymous. So anything that happens if I wasn't there and I don't like it, I don't get the same thing about it until I step forward and get wherever it happened next time. But we'll go off into that. We'll let these guys introduce themselves and then we'll get on about the business at hand. We don't know why he's here, but he's here. I don't know why I'm here. I heard it was something about damage control. Am I next to you? I'm an Al Anon from Alabama. My name is Beau Templins.

And I live down in a little town in Alabama called West Blochton. And the best way I can describe that two years is right across the highway from East Blochton. And that's just the way that is. It's out in the middle of the woods. And I walked in the doors of Al Anon September the 4th, 1982 and have been an active member of Al Anon since that time. One of the greatest things that happened to me early in my journey is that I was introduced to an open AA Big Book study where they actually allowed Al Anons to come in and sit in and be a part of the Big Book study. And it wasn't a big book reading, it was a big book study.

As a matter of fact, one of the first arguments my wife and I had, because she was over there in the AA room, she's been sober for 21 and a half years. And one of the things the old guy would do that was tearing that Big Book study is every Monday night when it was over he'd throw out a question. And you had to come back to the next Monday night and not just giving the answer to the question, but tell them what page and where it was in the book.

And we'd get home and we had one Big Book. And that happened to be Shirley's and she let me know that.

And so in a very short period of time I had my own Big Book and been eternally grateful for that. I have, for the first 20 years of my journey I had old time sponsors. When I'm since died and the other one is very, very ill, my old time sponsors, I mean they raised me in the textbook, Alcoholics Anonymous. And I believe in that book and I believe in the AA program. So I don't know why I'm here either. But I sure am proud to be here this week and to be associated with this elite pair that we have over here. So with that I'll pass it right back. Thank you, Tom. Years ago I used to go to a thing called Happy Hour where you got two for the price of one. This reminds me a bit of that. And I know anytime that I had two in front of me I was I was elated. And so I'm quite happy sitting up here. My name is Jerry and I am an alcoholic. Hi Jerry. Just get a real little housekeeping out of the way. I am a member of an Alcoholics Anonymous group called the week that was and we meet at 730 on Friday night in Manhattan, Kansas. Now I love to say Manhattan and just stop there. Because people then they look at me with the new respect thinking and I am from Manhattan. And back home they know that I mean Manhattan, Kansas.

In any event if you're ever in Manhattan, Kansas on Friday night and you find yourself with little or nothing to do around 730 in the evening come on by and we'll entertain you and I guarantee if you're in Manhattan on Friday night you'll have little or nothing to do. I have because of God's infinite grace and I want to say as much as I can this weekend with a great sense of humor because the fact that I'm even here at all is extremely humorous. I mean as my story unfolds you'll see why I can say that. But my God's infinite grace mixed with a great amount of humor that my God had. I have been continuously sober since January 17th, 1977.

And what I want to do this weekend with what little time I have is share with you what it's like living with the Spirit. And yet in such a practical way because see when I'm living with the Spirit I'm a good father. I'm not a real serious father but I'm a good father. And I'm a dependable father. And when I'm living with the Spirit my wife knows who's going to make sure that there's air in the tires and that the oil is changed in the car and that I might take out the trash when I'm living with the Spirit. Those are practical things. It also means that I will carry in wood for a wood stove that we have without saying, hey honey I carried some wood in. In late 1976 the best folks could figure out to do with me was to put me into a mental institution for the rest of my life. I was 35 years old and they truly didn't know what else to do with me. And I'm still amazed that people will allow me to come and see them. I mean New York, let's face it, for a kid who was born and raised in Kansas, New York is fairly sophisticated. And so to get on a real airplane at a real airport somebody has paid real money to let a guy that should be in a nut house come out and talk to them is still an amazing treat. It really is. And a part of that treat is that I get to see folks here that I have known now for many years. Some of my new up in Rhode Island. Some I know from down in Virginia. Some I know from over here in Queens. Some I've met up in Westchester County. We got some friends from Harlem that I don't see here this particular weekend but the weekends young and maybe they'll show up. And each time I get to see those folks, I'm touched. I really am in a very, very special way. And when you all touch me that way, I realized that all my life, this is what I was looking for. So I mean, we can talk about the big book and we can do this and we can say on page 39, it says thus and so and I can pretend to be an expert. And the truth of the matter is you all touch me in a way. And I am a part of a family because I do some things on a precise spiritual path that makes it possible for me to spend time with you and for you to understand me and for me to understand you because we do some of the same spiritual exercises. And I tell you what, I still am sad and once in a while when I see people that can't be touched the way one I call it, can touch another. Because it just ways we reach one another. And it's just absolutely marvelous. I gave this old man sitting here on my on my left, I gave him a hat many years ago and he's still wearing the damn thing. He looks

good in it. And then many years later, he gave me a watch and I thought I was real touched when he gave me the watch. I thought he gave me the watch because he loved me because that's why I gave him the hat. And he gave me this watch and then it dawned me one day after I just had it for a little bit that he he wanted me to use it when I was talking so I had no one to shut up. But that is the way we do with one another. I got I got the other day. I here several months ago, I was at somebody's place for a weekend and I slept in a bed and I got I always loved when I get stand there home and I slept in a bed and the pillows that I slept on were just absolutely marvelous.

I just and I just couldn't get over the fact that I thought I thought maybe they'd sent off to Sweden and had these pillows flown in or something. I wasn't sure but they were nice and so I told my friend I said you know Darlan these these pillows that do you let us sleep on or just the most comfortable thing and the other day I got a big box in the mail. I mean huge boxing didn't weigh much and I was trying to figure out what in the world have I ordered that would come in our box that size and doesn't weigh anything and and I opened it up and of course there's a set of these darn pillows and I have slept beautifully for the last four nights as a result of these new pillows. Now you say wait a minute that ain't no big deal but I tell you what it is a big deal isn't it. Those are the kind of things that make this a big deal or a nifty deal whatever you want to call. And so as this weekend unfolds I will share with you to the best of my ability how did I get here and I'm going to tell you some stories and most of all I'm going to try to share with you that the greatest of all things and that is if if you want what we have if you want it now you may not want it you may not want what we have but if you do if you do there's a few little things that you can do that we do and you will have an experience and that experience will be that you will be in touch with the spirit and you'll find it absolutely unnecessary to take a drink. I used to hear the old timers say that and I got so tired of them saying they have found it unnecessary to take a drink since but buss and so and I thought Jesus Christ can't you find something better to say than found it unnecessary to take a drink and after almost 28 years I have discovered there's a real good reason for saying that I have found it unnecessary to take a drink because that describes it so absolutely perfectly I have found it unnecessary to take a drink and a big part of my life it was absolutely necessary to take a drink the practical benefits of living with the spirit if we want to kind of set aside some of the esoteric parts of this just the practical benefits part of the practical benefits is my kids call me and they say dad you are so dependable or predictable they always call me predictable now I translate that in my head just that you know I'm dependable they call me predictable but I see that is dependable and I tell you what I spent a lot of years where I wasn't dependable and it's a marvelous deal and that's a part of being in a in a in a condition where I find it unnecessary to take a drink because I'm now today dependable I don't have a conscience grinding away at me because I didn't get something done as we sit here tonight and we share some time with one another I don't have anything that's undone right now I don't have anything it's undone at all and so I can get to be comfortable with you all it didn't end a marvelous deal just to be comfortable we went out to dinner and I had I was able to have my mind free and clear and be with be with the people I was with because everything's done everything's done and I just find that so amazing I see I spent most of my life where I live in one or two places and neither one of them was here it was last week last month two hours ago something and I should have done wish I would have done differently could have done better but I had some some great regret over something in the past or I had great fear of what was going to occur two hours from now two days from now two weeks and now two months from now so I was way out ahead of myself but what I wasn't was I wasn't here and I wasn't now and years ago I was with a guy one night and he said aren't we okay here now and I'll ask you that as we as we began this weekend I will tell you then I am okay right here I really in I don't need to

drink here I just I truly don't I'm okay here more importantly I'm okay now and I have a hunch that you all are too I was the very first thing that I discovered I couldn't have articulated this 27 plus years ago could not have articulated but what happens when I am in the company of an A group or another old alcoholic if you will is that when I am in their company I am okay I always have been I remember when I first started on this journey I would go into a meeting of our colleagues anonymous and I would have just a few minutes after I got in there I'd realize that I was my mind was beginning to quiet down my body was beginning to relax and I'd be okay for a little while and when I left it would all the noise would start up again and that's what carried me for a long time was I'd go back so I could experience what it was what it was like just to be okay for just a little while here we are many many years later and most of the time unless I'm out in traffic like you all have here isn't that in that wild out there oh boy we came back across a bridge over here and I looked back up the street and and I cut for miles and miles I could see nothing but headlights one right up against another when Gerard picked me up oh if you haven't ever ridden around town with Gerard I mean if you you want to have an experience hook up with the guy up on the name of Gerard in here I saw him come in just a few minutes ago so I know he's here just riding around with him for a little while we hadn't been in we hadn't been in I hadn't been in in in this part of the country for about 10 minutes in one car hit another bam we came across that bridge and I looked at all those lights and I thought holy moly but I'm not out there I'm in the air and and I I look out at this crowd and I thank my god this is a pretty clean cut recently intelligent looking a bunch of folks and why would they be here but I know why I'm just having some fun with you all I know why but who would have ever thought can you remember those last four months when you're out there anytime I get together for a weekend like this I my mind I believe it's a gift in the spirit I always get to think back what it was like that last three four five months before I got here what it was like who would have ever believed that we could go from there to here from there to here and like I say I I didn't come in here seeking to connect with the spirit that was given to me it was I didn't know what I was doing I really was just trying not to drink I mean I had I had everybody on my case really it was a bad bad situation I was 35 years old three kids a wife just about to be evicted from my home couldn't feed those kids and that's what it was like for me back in November and December of 1976 this time of the year and still could not quit drinking I think back on those days and think how can we go from there to here and if I say well it's through God's grace and it is by the way but if you don't understand what God's grace is don't worry about that I don't understand what God's grace is either I just know it is you say well what's God like I don't have a clue folks I'd love to tell you I know what God's infinite power has done for me I lived in horrible horrible fear most of my life today I don't have to live in fear and I could go on and on and on and on and I because there's just so much that I have a sense that I want to share with you and we will we'll we'll share what needs to be shared and what doesn't need to be shared we'll run out of time okay works that way besides that I want to hear this beautiful guy from Alabama just I and I want to hear you all from time to time and of course Don knows how dare he is to me so I want to listen to him too most of all I think I speak for all of us and they'll they'll tell you to we thank you from the very bottom of our hearts that you would do anything like this and include us in it I mean I I wish I wish there's some way that I had a better command of the vocabulary that where I could certainly and clearly express the deep appreciation and gratitude that I have to be here with you like this I mean it's just a marvelous deal and all the way I know how to do that is to give you everything that I brought with me hopefully the spirit will flow through us and and I can convey some things to you that that at least what what they mean to me and if it creates a resonance for you that'll be terrific and with that I think I will see if we're going to move toward a more structured thing here I don't know how I don't know whether we will or not if I turn it over the press it won't be

structured I don't think but it'll be interesting Shelby's here yes he is John knows Shelby gee Shelby I have to burn my hand she'll burn my hand we get to make fun of him because he asked us to work with him and then he moved to New York it seems somehow the people out of Denver who get involved in the big book end up missionaries in other far lands it's just the way it is I did not I was remiss in not mentioning that my home group meets at six o'clock every Friday morning at St. Joseph's Hospital in Denver we are formatted simple we don't have any ritual at all we've gone back to the way it was in the beginning at six we get quiet and when the spirit moves somebody says something we talk about a step of tradition and a concept back to back it takes one meeting or one month we don't care we just move when we're through with one we move to the other the first Friday after the first Tuesday or second anyway right after the district meeting or an area assembly each month that belongs to our GSR and our central office rep that's their meeting we are part of Alcoholics Anonymous and we want to know what's going on so and if they take five minutes as fine if they take the whole meeting that's fine we really have an interchange there because we're part of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole they don't always like to see us coming to the assemblies because we have something to say following that meeting we all go to the cafeteria and have a real meeting or another meeting much as I hate to admit it to this day it hasn't gone away that in any formal meeting that I attend I'm only partly listening the rest of me is thinking what I'm going to say when it's my turn and I can't help it's just the way it is but over breakfast we chatter we talk so if you got a new person you come to that meeting we won't hurt them if it's in we'll just we'll work with them when we get to the cafeteria some remarkable things have happened there and I'm with Jerry we're going to talk about this book and the things that are in it but we're talking to the choir some of the stuff that gets left out is what I want to talk about this weekend after you're already spiritually awake now what because it's way way beyond going to another meeting that's important but it's not vital anymore it's important because that's where our work is to be found and where our fellowship with other people begins to happen but if you're still going to meetings to get talk to me during the break although there are times when I go to a meeting to get but I don't go to meeting to get well I go to get what's at the meeting anyway that's for tomorrow some time we've been 12 stepping an old street drunk in in the cafeteria for about six months Joe comes down once in a while this guy several years ago while he was drunk he had a car wreck and now he's almost a permanent resident of the hospital on an outpatient basis we know he had a car wreck because for years now or for months now we've stopped by and we chat with him he sits by himself and he pays for his table space he picks up a bunch of free newspapers and brings him along and he hands him out to anybody that's willing to stop long enough and that pays for his space and we chat with him he won't come sit with us yet he has come over and stood at the end of the table and talked with us and sometimes it takes a while but we really care about this guy and about all three or four months ago he had a grandma seizure right there in the cafeteria and went over backwards and hit his head on the floor and of course with head wounds and his blood went everywhere I've never seen such a response from the hospital staff everybody from the EMTs to the hospital administrator within a minute or two was there dealing with him now he was a friend of ours but we are also smart enough to know that in a hospital we're not needed okay all we can do is get in the way but after they'd clean him up a couple of the nurses came over to us to make sure we were all right see they've been watching us and him and the interaction and they knew that we were friends and we would be concerned they wouldn't make sure we were okay which brought home to me once again that people watch us if you're a member of alcoholics anonymous you need to know they're watching you yeah I didn't take you at face value I watched you if you couldn't demonstrate to me something different I didn't want to hear any more I've heard all the words I can stand but if your words match the way you live then maybe I'll pay attention to

them or I'll at least get curious enough to ask you how the hell did you get that done and I don't only ask that of people that I've watched for a while and it's not because I'm paranoid but I'm I'm a duck I'm susceptible to persuasion if you think it's a good idea I'm game a lot of trouble through my life we talk about having an open mind my dad he was a very wise man said you want an open mind but you don't want it so open that everybody who drives by so there's a trash in it so we become a little bit discerning here my life is none of my business since I surrendered to the to the God that I understand but the conduct of my life is entirely my business I have to become a little bit discerning who do I hang out with not very many people I love most everybody don't like everybody don't pretend to you some folks are just unlikable hell I'm sorry I had a parole officer told me that one time he said I'll know you're okay when I can find somebody who's just met you that'll tell me honestly they didn't like you because you can't possibly please everybody and if you try to it just where you just wore me out I did not know I was alcoholic when alcoholics anonymous came and got me and I didn't come to you because I didn't know I was alcoholic well I would have come to you at the time I came into the fellowship I was five and a half months sober meaning that far away from my last drink or any other kind of chemical I'm also one of the freaks that came out of Berkeley in the 60s screaming out where there's dope there's hope burned down city hall man we tried we just couldn't find city hall but I'm not a drug addict I was certified that I was certified when I got here as a sociopath type to psychopath and a manic depressive drug addict and I'm none of those things although their sociopath comes pretty close to my behavior but I had to find out see I'm one of those who have been around long enough to know that our recovery process which is found in this book called alcoholics anonymous will work for anyone as long as the foundation is truth if you don't have a foundation of truth then it isn't going to work you know just frustrate the hell out of you so on an individual basis I had to find out what am I really and I know I'm an alcoholic who had a multitude of other problems but I'm an alcoholic alcohol wasn't a problem for me it was a condition of being and I still have it I have a body that if I give it alcohol instantly demands more alcohol I had a chance to sponsor a psychiatrist once oh I love that I've also gotten a sponsor award and I love that thank you all about that you know that oh yeah this psychiatrist is one of the founding psychiatrist is one of the finest alcohol and drug treatment programs in the world the pair one concept university to hospital in Denver been going for many years now very successful couldn't stay sober though I knew too much about alcoholism it's a real problem for and I'm the sponsor at the end of the line because I only know one thing how to take you through the steps of the big book in the hopes that in doing so and in our sharing you will awaken spiritually because I can't get you sober maybe we can find the spirit within you because that will and and if you don't want to do it that way I'd love to go bowling with you but don't come at six in the morning I'm not interested okay there are too many people who are and anyway I was reading the doctor's opinion to him because the way I was brought into this and the way I do it is very simple you show up at my house at six o'clock in the morning on a regular basis and that can be once a week or it can be once every day I don't care but it has to be regular and because I know that your main problem isn't alcohol it's that you can't read well alcoholics don't know how to read they read white and the book is written in black they interpret the identify with or relate to god how many hours we wasted trying to relate to things we still don't know anything about so anyway I just read the big book to you word for word share some of my stories get you to share some of your stories because that's what it says to do and together we will walk on this spiritual journey and I take it with you I will not ask you to do anything that I'm not doing currently and somehow in all that people seem to stay sober but I'm in the doctor's opinion with the psychiatrist and it's pretty simple it's not not that complex but he didn't get it I'm watching it go into his head as information and get lost among all the other information he already has and he didn't get it and I love

working with people like that because it has caused me to learn effective prayer oh god help what am I going to say to this guy because he's put his life in my hands and I don't take that lightly and I'm not getting through to him and self-worth isn't getting through to him he's too damn smart so I'm praying how can I make this even simpler and I heard this come out of my mouth down what happens to you after the first drink he said oh around the fourth and fifth or sixth drink I kind of forget what I am and what I'm supposed to do next and I end up getting drunk and I said well what happens to you after the first drink he said well around the fourth and fifth or sixth drink somewhere I lose track of where I am and where I'm supposed to be next and I'm getting drunk what happens to me after the first drink is the second drink that's it he got it that's it what happens to me after the first drink is the second drink and then he helped me because you do you know it didn't necessarily happen within an hour of the first one it maybe I had a drink on Monday he said it was Thursday before it caught me and so I learned a little something from him but it caught him somewhere along the way if when I drink I'm unable to control the amount that I drank or if I want to stop I find I can't stop that defines alcoholism and he got it and I got it the Chinese told us this 3 or 4,000 years ago man takes a drink drink takes a drink drink takes the man alcoholism the drink taking a drink no wonder that's ego deflation at depth we finally have something I cannot control even with the delusion that I can I can live in complete fantasy but I know if once I've accepted the fact that what happens to me after the first drink is the second drink and that's irrevocable it does happen my ego is busted we're finally on the way it doesn't take emotional brow beating my god that causes me to drink can't you see what you're doing to your kids oh yeah that hurts the bad I better have a drink don't you see what you're doing to yourself oh yeah oh yeah I need a drink I can give you a hundred reasons I drank or more the main reason I drank is no reason at all and the ego finds that impossible to accept and once it accepts it it's broken that one little piece of information is the key to our entire recovery process and bill says in the big book any description of alcoholism which leaves out this physical factors incomplete and that includes ours so I offer a challenge to you because I've already heard it once this weekend anytime I say to anyone that the recovery process is in the first 164 pages I'm lying to them that leaves out the doctor's opinion and it leaves out two of the most important sentences in the big book the first two which tells people who we are we of alcoholics anonymous are more than a hundred men and women who've recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body I don't have any problem at all with people who are still in recovery but I'm not I've recovered from alcoholism all that means that I don't suffer from any of the symptoms of alcoholism anymore I suffer a good deal from the human condition but what are the symptoms of alcoholism as we understand it well if I take one drink I will take another a craving will develop that causes me to put everything else secondary becomes paramount to all of their interests well I don't drink so I don't have that problem I don't suffer from that the other part of my illness is that I can't seem to remember that I have alcohol on my mind all the time well I haven't I haven't thought of a drink repellar fix for 35 plus years it's gone it's not there anymore I am incredibly vulnerable because I don't see alcohol it has to be brought to my attention now you can either be scared of that or you can accept the fact as I have that I must have a power greater myself watching over me because that's going to catch me at an odd time won't catch me tonight won't catch me at six o'clock in the morning with my group or somebody I'm working with I'll tell you exactly when it almost caught me at 37,000 feet one time I was coming back from a little deal here in New York as a matter of fact I've been in and out of this town a lot I had the privilege of serving as a delegate from my area and a trustee at large so I'm in and out a lot and I'm headed home after a weekend here that had been pretty good I hadn't heard anybody and didn't get pissed at anybody which was rare at the board level anyway and I'm headed home to the family that I love beyond anything I can describe

to you now and then because they I fly united a lot they bumped me into first class I used to think it was because I've done God's work well and this is my reward sure you know little spiritual delusions now and then I talked with a flight attendant once and she said no we're falling we need your seat and we can't resell the first class seat but we can get you out of yours we can resell yours I don't care why they put me out there it's better than back there and they serve real food they use real plates they even have linen on that little drop down seat and real steel silverware or the well they used to I was bumped up in the first class a few weeks ago and now you have a steel spoon and a steel fork and a plastic knife and the thought crossed my mind that's weird I wonder if they know what I can do with a fork don't tell anybody I said that but anyway I'm up there in first class and it's nice and it's an evening flight so the lights were kind of dim and the reading lights were on gave the room a nice ambiance I don't know what it means right somebody use it to you I'm reading a book I've been wanting to read because I've got a three and a half hour flight home everything was fine I was emotionally and mentally stable and fit I was spiritually fit and that's the third part of my illness and the main part of my illness I have a spiritual disease and it's called separation from that's the disease that's my real problem a sense of separation from God and the people about me everything we do here is geared to bring us back into line with God and the people about me anyway I was fit and they started serving supper and I saw the flight attendant pouring this ruby beautiful red burgundy stuff into my seat in age glass just out of the corner of my eye and I turned to look at it because in the light and the way the light was hitting it and all the comfort it got my attention and my mind said that really looks good now that's the truth I think people with long-term sobriety are far more in danger from the truth than the art from lies of course it looked good I didn't see why that's not part of my consciousness burgundy red stuff it looks good and immediately my mind said I bet this is going to taste good well of course it would why else would she give it to her I'm pouring a vinegar but I'm still not thinking wine that's just going to taste good then my mind went into the knowledge I have about wine a lot of her thinking about wine and said I bet that'll make this whole dinner taste better because that's one of the main functions of wine for real people cuts the grease from what you just ate so you can taste what you're about to eat and immediately a prayer began in me and I don't know how else to explain that the spirit is alive where I am God is and the spirit is alive and well and there are things that happen for me where I know the spirit is saying you who and that happened and I immediately withdrew and went inside because that's where I go and instantly realized my very next thought would have been I probably should have one of those two without ever thinking that is alcohol that's all vulnerable I am I must have that spirit to watch over me because it'll catch me at 37 000 feet without thinking about it and this book is filled with stories of people who have the same experience with no thought at all they started drinking again I don't want to live my life afraid that that's going to happen to me so I have learned spiritual exercises that keep me focused on something else so that the spirit I'm available to the spirit that's all I have to be I get distressed sometimes in the new AA with some of the things I hear not all of them some of them I want to hurt the other day to stir me a little bit the chairperson said let's invite God in I'm thinking what wait a minute God's already here let's acknowledge that that little shift makes a difference you know the shift in thinking the cause I hear people talk about not being connected anymore scares the hell out of me for them this isn't about being connected to something it's about acknowledging the presence of I can't be connected and unconnected from God or all the little life out of anxiety I don't want to do that I really trust and rely upon the spirit and to do the spirit's work I have to because I'm constantly put in conditions where I don't know what the hell to do next but we have entered into a new world where we just kind of know intuitively how to handle situations that used to baffle us and the great mercy of that is I usually don't know how I've done that for about six weeks after I've done it so I don't get to take any credit

for it at all all I have ever wanted to be was a good father and a good son and a member of my community we could just never pull it off and I can't lay that off on I didn't know how because I did I come from a functional home I'm sorry but I do well it's not fashionable anymore as far as I know I'm the only alcoholic in it my uncle Walter looked promising for a while he and Aunt Ruth used to drink and get drunk and have a ball they partied all the time good hard drinkers and then I don't know 40 years ago uncle Walt's doctor said Walter if you don't stop drinking you're gonna die and he quit just didn't have what it took oh you got to be tough to be an alcoholic you got to be tough in every you got to be tough enough to sleep in the snow on the street not freeze to death you got to be tough enough to lie to the people that you love the most got to be tough enough to steal from your children and everybody else around you this is an easy deal got to be tough enough like Jimmy was tough enough that he drank rubbing alcohol and survived that you got to be pretty tough to be smelled bad but he made it and recovery is for tough people too the spiritual life is not one for weaklings or sissies you got to be really tough to live a spiritual life and I could spend an hour telling you why and I won't maybe we'll chat about some of that you got to be tough this calls for sacrifice and in my human condition in my human mind I always thought sacrifice meant that I take the the person that I love the most and put them on the altar cut their throat and give them to God oh that's what we're trying sacrifices is sacred offering the whole word traces back to sacred I offer to God the very best of me that's all it means I will give you my very best and it means I have to understand that that's good enough for God to use I can no longer play the game that I am not worthy the hell I'm not I'm here and that's all he ever asked just show up so I make a sacrifice there are nights I'd rather stay home but this is one of them my wife retired two years ago and my grandchildren are home tonight and they're baking cookies and my wife has gotten cuter in the last two years and she was when I married her it's true it's true and I'm not dead yet but she and I understand something the reason we have what we have and we've been married now well we've been together as of December 3rd for 28 years we haven't had a fight yet she won't fight and I won't fight she's right most of the time anyway and oh yeah she thinks I'm the cutest thing she's ever seen and I agree sacrifices an important thing because sometimes it does mean there are the things I would like to be doing but this is more important and it's described in our book just before the third step describes spiritual people in their way of thinking we begin to lose interest in our little plans and designs and think more and more of other people in several places it talks about my thoughts should turn to how I could be of use to you because that is being of use to me when I was sick it was me and who I needed you to be to give me what I thought I needed I'm no longer sick I'm spiritually awake and part of that means that I understand clearly I am you and you are me and what happens to you happens to me what happens for you happens for me I believe that the spiritual life truly in my present state of being is one of an enlightened self-interest that's the best I can get out of it I still want mine I still want to be comfortable and appreciated and loved and wanted and needed but I've discovered that the best way for me to get mine is to make sure you get yours and mine comes automatically and people think this is a hard thing to do that says I love you I ain't fighting nothing going on here I am here tonight because I was invited to come and my experience of God is just that all my relationships are based on my relationship with God and if they're not I feel it instantly first thing I learned about God is it comes by invitation only not because he's mean but because if I don't invite I'm not aware and it's just about being when it comes by invitation only so I only come by invitation my worst character defect was my rudeness my willingness to impose myself and my ideas in your life without asking you whether you want to be there or not comes every time there's an invitation yep got to fit that one that one's a bitch I was taught early on in A to never turn down a legitimate A request now that sounds simple but didn't that a bitch I've got to decide what legitimate and what is it oh my goodness how do I

figure that out well it isn't that hard just to say yes to everything comes by if you got the time but in time that changes I'm going to spend more time in the later part of this book this week because many of you have already been here and Jerry and I've already covered the ground and Bo's covered the ground tell you one thing then I want to we'll take a break and give it back to boy you want to meet how somebody said we'll quit it hey I think that's ridiculous we'll take a break and come back yeah I uh I do say yes to most ever most everything because that is what I'm supposed to do we'll talk later about some of the times when I can if others are going to be affected I should consult with them too that's not just an amend principle that's a life principle two years ago about eight nine months before the event I was invited to go with another past delegate from our it to Cedar Rapids Iowa and do the traditions and concepts weekend like we're doing here only with traditions and concepts very studious and use the board or all that between when I accepted the invitation in about three four weeks before the event my granddaughter came up with her very first dance recital didn't take five minutes for me to cancel me out of that there's only one first dance recital and I was needed there by her by my wife and by my daughter and traditions and concepts I'm not the be all and end all I was taught if you can't make it get a suitable replacement so we got a replacement that the other guy sponsored anyway so they didn't need me her second dance recital I was with you it isn't that hard to decide but sometimes it takes if you're indoctrinated now what you got conflict what's going to happen if I don't show up in Cedar Rapids you'll probably have a better time without me my home group does I got well we were running about 12 13 people you know at six in the morning we don't have much dead weight and I was on the road for six straight weekends and came back in the group of grown to 22 so it's clear to me that the best way to help my group is to not show up one part of my mind says that they were glad I came back the thing I like about my home group is just I'm just a member they just function fine without me they function better with me because every member of a group that's missing diminishes the group a little bit it didn't hurt him much but it diminishes them anyhow I can already tell you I'm frustrated because I've already thought of enough things to talk about to get it through till Wednesday and we got a picture of him so we're going to take a break he thought he was brought up here to give a long winded alanon talk so let's take a break and let him start now smokers I understand that you need