

Big Book Weekend, location undetermined

2003 | Steps 3-4 | Reading edition

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Transcript

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So are you ready to take the third? So we're going to take the third step and invite anybody who wants to join with us. That's up to you. God really doesn't care how you come at Him. Just come at Him. Sit, stand, hold hands, kneel. It really doesn't matter. It's all up to what you want to do. I can get down, but somebody has to help me up. So as you wish. Did you hear the silence? Was it pleasant? That has been my experience of God over the years. It's very pleasant. God never yells. Never. Didn't hit people in head. I hope that's real.

Alrighty, I mean, can you see that thing lighting up? Yup, not say things like that in a polite company. Would I be awful after all this? You're saying we're going to come back and talk to me? I think the easiest way for me to share my view and my experience of this would be to share some inventory with you. I must tell you that over the years the numbers have come off the steps for me. They're one whole thing. So the fourth step or the tenth step doesn't make any difference to me. It's still inventory.

There's two things I do with the tenth step. I'm still trying to finish that first shabby little inventory. Never have finished it yet. And the other is to deal with the current situations as they come up. The first thing we do is make a grudge list. Who am I mad at? And why am I angry? And what aspect of self is being hurt, threatened, or interfered with? Because nothing else will disturb me. Some aspect of self is being hurt, threatened, or interfered with. And it's always justifiable.

I'm going to run quickly over what I see here and then I'll share a piece with you if that's all right with you. I can get a new drunk to do this first piece. Who are you mad at? Why are you mad at? How does that make you feel? What's that messing with? Huh? The mic is not, well I'm just not holding it up close enough. I watch the rock stars do it like that. That sounded good didn't it? And they have discovered a new career.

So there are what we call three columns here. Who I'm angry with? Why I'm angry? And what is being affected? What aspect of self is being hurt, threatened, or interfered with? And there's not that many. And you all know how to do that anyway. Unfortunately I'd run into a lot of people along the way who've done this much and thought that was done. It gives me clear directions on where to start. Since we go back through our lives. I mean let's start with this one. Who's current? And then go back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty.

Half-majors of course of battles, nothing. Everything has to go down here. You will run into them. I'll run into them who say well, lying to that teacher in fifth grade. Do I have to bother with that? Yeah. Of course you do. Lying is lying. And what I'm trying to find out here is a way of thinking that's separating me from you and from God. So the incident isn't as important as the way of thinking and I need to find out about my attitudes.

The first thing we then we go back and after we're through with this and we take a look at it. The first thing apparent is that the world wants people. We're often quite wrong. Isn't that interesting? I was right the whole time. But as long as I'm angry about it, I'm ineffective. The world wants people are often quite wrong. Mostly because as they pointed out to me, I picked them. Okay. The people who are near the people I picked. Albert

turned us in.

I picked him. I look at the bad relationships and look at who I picked. I picked sick people so that I could become heroic and do the rescues. And just loved it. Made me feel useful. Made me tired too. To conclude the others were wrong as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome is that people continue to wrong us and we stayed sore because I kept picking them. So from a sponsorship standpoint that's important to people I work with know this. I'm not a crisis counselor.

They get a hundred bucks an hour and I have a list of them and that's what you want. That doesn't mean that if you're in a genuine crisis that I won't be there and I'll listen to your bullshit once. Then I'll give you the solution. Don't come at me again and don't ever come at me with relationship problems. Which means romance. I have never been able to figure out how to have a successful sick relationship. I just can't help you man. My only advice to you is quit that. And don't you dare ask me how do I do that because I can tell you.

Anyway, sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore ourselves. There's precedent here for putting myself on the inventory. I've only done that once. I don't do it again. One of the major reasons for inventory is to discover the harm I've done so I can make amends. And I don't ever owe me amends. Ever. But if you're going to put yourself on the inventory, make it the last name down. There's a presumption if I'm mad at myself for not having done better than I had the power to do better and I didn't.

I do now. I didn't then. So why bother? It's just self-indulgence as far as I'm concerned. But if you have to do it, go ahead and do it. Then you'll learn it's just self-indulgence. Now we're going to be giving some new ideas. That's what this whole thing is about. Getting a new way of thinking. It's plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. Is that plain? If that in plain, we need to talk some more.

This is almost lineal here. I use what I call a checklist method when we're doing inventory. When it says something, we don't go any further until we've done that. So after the third step prayer, my people go home at that point and make a list. That's what it says to do. We made a list. It doesn't say analyze it. It doesn't think else. It says make a list. In dealing with the resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions, and principals with whom we were angry.

If we don't that yet, no. Then go home and do that. As soon as you're through, call me. You no longer have an appointment with me. We have nothing more to talk about until your list is finished. Then call me and I promise you this. I will become instantly available. That's where my trust comes in because I don't know when you're going to finish your list. That's a promise that I've always been able to keep. I will become immediately available.

I may be in Alaska, but there's telephones. I'm going to just give you the next instructions anyway. An interesting thing's happened here. Most people comply with this. I've had a couple of them though. I fell to 33 years sober, a friend of mine. When I was 30 years sober, so that's what? Six years ago. About the same time of year. I had never been through the steps. 33 years sober, he was a mess. I wasn't, so he wanted to go through this chair.

We spent most of the first three or four weeks unlearning everything he'd learned in 33 years in AA. I

listened to that garbage. I really do. Once. Anyway, we had a powerful third step experience. We really got there. Send him home to make a list. I've not seen him since. Call me after holidays so I got kind of busy and didn't get in the list made. I said, well, you know, one name counts as a list. Because it does. If that's all you can come up with, come up with that.

So anyway, that's what I do. Check list. Then we ask ourselves why we're angry and we go through this third column. Then we review it. So as a plain little life that includes deep resentment can lead only to futility and unhappiness. The spiritual life is very practical. The way Bill wrote it out for us. We quit playing God because it didn't work. Now I have to just admit it, if I'm angry, I'm screwing myself. Not you. I don't hurt you a bit by being mad at you. It just eats my heart out.

To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile? And I love the word squander. It was the perfect word. It means you know what you're doing and you're doing it anyway. I just won the lottery. See it? Tear it up. I have all these resources and I'm just going to squander them, deliberate conscious of where I'm wasting it. And that's what resentment does to me because it's a spiritual disease and it separates me and the longer I'm separated, the sicker I get.

I'm mad at you and I've got an ally and we're doing fine in my head but he won't get mad at you so now I've got two resentments. And she's going with him so she decides to abandon my ship and now I've got three. And it just goes on and on and on. When harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off in the sunlight of the spirit and harboring is a perfect word too. You know what a harbor is? That's a safe place in the middle of a storm with a ship's park.

You harbor them. You contain them. And if I harbor these kind of negative thoughts and resentments, pretty soon the harbor is full. I got more coming. They start running into each other. If we were to live we had to be free of anger. Do you believe that? It doesn't mean I won't get it. I misunderstood that at the beginning. There are things that happen on this planet and if they don't piss you off you are really, really sick.

I have to be free of it. I have to do something about it and get free of it because it'll eat me. When I came out of the service with a bad kind of discharge and got into some therapy, they used what is successful with regular people. One of the things they did I was angry with my dad for some stupid reason. My dad was a fine man but I was angry with him. So they had a punching bag and we had me picture him in the punching bag and punch it so I could get out of my anger.

I loved it. I really got involved in it. Anger on me is one of the finest highs available. It energizes me and I get caught up in it and I know I should stop and I can't and I just love anger. I've got to be free of it because it'll dominate me. It'll keep me away from you. So we go back to the list because it holds the key to the future. This list that we've made in the first three columns. We began to see the world as people really dominated us. If I resent you, you own me.

In that state, the wrong doing of others whether fancy to reel had the power to actually kill. And I asked Bruce, how do I know the difference between fancy to reel? He said, if you're involved in it, it's fancy. True. I want to tell you a story. Some of you know Deb, lover. I'm going to walk with you as she walked with me through a terrible situation that makes this true. I've known this. We were at one of these deals in upstate New

York.

What was it? Mount Kisco, I think? Anyway, we were there. Yeah, let's kiss go. Young Deb was early twenties at that time. She was in the combat gear. Literally, camouflage clothes, boots, everything buttoned down, sleeves buttoned down, all buttoned down tight. We got to this and we talked about our problems of row making. And in the midst of that, she spoke and she said, wait just a damn minute. She was angry. In fact, you'd know that if you got close. If you got close, you're going to lose something.

Body parks. Just a damn minute. She said, when I was five years old, my grandfather molested me. What could I possibly have done to bring that on? I said nothing. Absolutely nothing. Somebody ought to horse whip that old bastard. But it's too late, Deb. And that isn't what's causing the problem today anyway. And she walked with me and helped me put this in order. It looks like this. This really happened. The first time I remember it, it has changed just a little bit by the pain and the way I'm thinking about it. And then I tell you about it and you give me feedback and it changes it again a little bit.

And after 14 years of that, being constantly replayed and changed, what's gotten me buttoned down isn't what really happened anyway. It's a variation on the theme. And if I'm ever to be free, I must clear all out a way to get to what really did happen. And do the only thing possible to get free. Make it as if it didn't happen. And the word for that is forgiveness. Until I can do that, I'm in bondage to self. And I knew that because I'd gone through the same process with some things that happened to me when I was little.

It isn't fair. It just didn't fair. Somebody ought to horse whip the old bastard, but it's just too late. And what I'm doing to myself by replaying that over and over is letting it happen all over and over in every variation I can think of. Now, does that work? Does that way of thinking work? Well, Deb sends me a card. She's an artist. In fact, she just finished a show a while back. And she sends me little drawings from the beginning.

The first one, what she'd done was cover the paper with dark greens and browns. And as part of that, I also do some red-road ceremony. And we did a little healing ceremony and I gave her a feather. And we had a smoke and might as well add all the ceremony you can to it. So here's this browns and greens. And she had scratched out a feather. You have to really look to see it. Scratched it out with a, looks like a needle.

Now, a while later, I got another. She covered the paper with blue and scratched out something out of the blue. And then a little later, I got one where it was, the paper was white. She'd actually drawn in a bug. And it was still frenetic, but it was opening. Then I got one of just a dog, a line drawing, no fancy stuff. Really good. The last one I got was on green paper. And it's got what looks like a sumo wrestler in an orange tutu or something.

And it says, pass the peas. Happy Groundhog Day. What the hell does that mean? She's into whimsy. Pass the peas. I'm going to ask her someday, what the hell does that mean? I have two of those. Pass the peas. Happy Groundhog Day. Love her to death. I have to believe in the truth of that and only because of my own life, because of that demonstration. And the continued work we had with her. She was not damaged, good to me.

She was a victim and that'll kill you. She needed to get free of it. And it just isn't fair. Ta-ta. So anyway, for what it's worth, that's where that one went. You wonder why I love these things. I see people's lives change here.

We turn back to this list because it holds the key to the future. Now here's a funny thing that happened in A. I've got a second edition. Mine says we were prepared to look for it from an entirely different angle.

Here's probably says we're prepared to look at it. We spent hours in meetings trying to determine the difference between the two. It was a printer's error. I went to general service to the first first edition and looked it up, and it's at it. And we finally concluded looking at it or looking for it mean the same damn thing. But we wasted hours in the Denver Young People's Group grappling with world shaking things like that.

We had meetings on, I'll never forget at York Street. The midnight meeting was almost always on any lengths. What does any lengths mean? Well, I can tell you now, any lengths means any lengths. Well, we spent enough hours to know that's true. We began to see the world as people really dominated. And in that state, the wrongdoing of others fancied real how the power to actually kill. If I'm involved in it, it's fancied. What really happened really happened, but that isn't what's playing in my head.

That's what I have to get rid of. That'll kill me. Another thing that that does is demean people. I come from a really good home, but in the late 20s and early 30s, my dad and grandpa were the head of the Colorado Ku Klux Klan. It was mainly a political organization with a lot of funky religious ideas attached to it. They both awakened spiritually somewhere in the early 30s or in the late 30s and took their robes off.

I left their robes on them for years after they took them off. That's what resentment does. People change, and if I don't acknowledge that, I'm demeaning them. It doesn't mean that I have to like what they've done, but it means they got to let it go. They're not the same person that did it. I am not the person that can yell at his children in order to smuggle marijuana across the border. If I were you would not want me here, I'll guarantee you you would not want me here.

I'll do that to my children. What do you think I might do to you? I'm not the same person, and I got to grant you the same thing. So this was our course. No more writing. Writing inventory is not the way to get free of resentment. It's the way to identify resentment. This is our course. This is more important than all the writing. Without this, the fourth column means nothing in my book. We realized that people who harmed us were perhaps spiritually sick or who wronged us.

Now what does that mean to me? I'm supposed to ask that question. When I'm spiritually sick, it's because I am cut off from my spiritual source. Oh, well if that's true for me, then maybe that's true for you. Maybe you're behaving that way because you don't have any spiritual power either. And when we're without spiritual power, I go power hunting. Maybe that's why you're doing it. It doesn't mean that that may be the exact reason, but I'm trying to find some way to take a different view here.

Though we didn't like their symptoms and the way these do service, they like ourselves were sick too. I don't get to say that's a sick bastard. This person like myself is perhaps spiritually sick, cut off from their spiritual source. What it does is take me out of the picture. If they're behaving that way toward me, it's because that's how they behave toward people. And I just happen to get in the wrong place at the wrong time, and I picked it.

They are behaving according to their true nature. And I don't have to like that, but that's what they're doing. It gives me a whole new view of things, doesn't it? How else am I going to find out where I've been selfish if I don't

think I have? So we ask God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. From this point on, from the third step on, all of life's problems have only one answer.

We ask God for the right thought or action. It starts right here. I had a little trouble with that. I didn't grant sick people patience and pity and tolerance. They scared me. I had to have a script for every life experience. There's only one script for sick people. What can I do for you? That scared me because you might ask me to do something. Read to me, change my bed pan, whatever. I'm busy. I have people to do and things to see.

I want a person to fender. We said to ourselves, this is a sick person. How can I be helpful to him? God saved me from being angry. God saved me from being angry. We avoid retaliation or argument. That's the one that goes on up here. Sell them to I retaliate or argue out here. Some people do, but I didn't. It's the one that's going on up here. I have to avoid it. From now on, every time I get to the sand, he said, she said, I know I should start avoiding that.

I got to avoid that retaliation or argument because we wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chance of being helpful and being helpful is the only salvation I have. Everything else is minor to my being helpful to others. We cannot be helpful to all people. But God will at least show us how to take a kind of intolerant view of each and every one. And I can't tell you how important that prayer was to me.

It saved my life September 12th. I've used this for years. September 11th just devastated me. I tend to identify with everybody. I had friends, one of my friends lost 200 of his friends. We all know people who had to help clean it up. This was a, I could not comprehend this. I just couldn't get anything around it. And I went into the deepest part of the darkest part of my mind. I didn't want these people caught and punished.

I wanted them caught. Covered with pig fat, made to eat a ham sandwich, then turned loose and see how they like walking around knowing they can't get into heaven. That's pretty mean. But that's where my head's going. And I'm fully aware I got to get over this. I have people to work with. I can't do that with this kind of rage and confusion going on. And the way this thing works is that the people I work with usually save my life.

And my friend Jack called me. Now Jack, in addition to being devastated by that event, is Jewish. There were things going on in his home that were tearing him up also. He was a real mess that morning. He said, what are we going to do? I said, I don't know, Jack. All I know for sure is that prayer is the answer. And I'd been praying, but I was making the wrong prayer. I was once again praying for relief from my pain, wrong prayer.

But when Jack asked me, what are we going to do, I had an answer. Jack, we need to make this prayer. Tonight in our evening review, let's both ask God to please, since we can't find it. Please show us how to take a kind of internal view toward these people. He said, well, I don't think it'll work, but we'll try it. And we did. And early the next morning Jack called me, and his voice was different. He was at peace. He said, I don't know if this is right or not, but I woke up with this thought.

Had I been raised by those people in that country with that set of values that have probably been flying one of those planes, instantly, I got free. Still don't like it. But then I began to realize whether I like it or not, they thought they were doing God's will. I don't comprehend that, but I got free. And that's what was important. Now I can go back and work effectively with people. I'd have been dead within a week or two.

I just know that. That kind of rage will kill me. So for what it's worth, this one works. And as we go through the inventory, how do I take a Collin-Tolerant View toward the federal agent that almost shot my son? Well, by realizing I brought him to the house. Come on in. Do your thing. How do I take a Collin-Tolerant View toward Albert who turned us all in by becoming aware that I knew he would? If he got caught, I knew he'd rule us over.

I just thought that I was faster, slicker, and smarter than they were. And I also thought the government narcotics people played fair and they don't. A lot of them, they don't. I was mad at them because when they arrested me and that raid, they didn't have a warrant. They had a telegram from a grand jury in Albuquerque with a warrant to follow. They were just in a hurry. And that didn't seem to matter. It didn't seem to matter to them that I didn't have any of the goods with me.

We'd gotten rid of that months before. They brought their own. You can't beat the system. Just get out of it. These are realizations that come with these prayers. So prayer gets pretty practical. You notice we haven't gotten the fourth column yet. And I'm praying already. I've already had a spiritual awakening that somehow, whether I understand or not, I'm the one that's at fault here. So now we go back to this damn list again.

Putting out of our minds the wrongs others have done, we regularly look for our own mistakes. So again, we don't look for my part. If we do, I still think you have a part and you don't have a part according to this. We're only going to look at where we've been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened. I answer seven questions here. I'll go over them with you. Those situations had not been entirely our fault. We tried to disregard the other person involved entirely.

Twice he says that in the same paragraph. Where will we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other persons. When we saw our faults, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and we're willing to set these matters straight. Again, willingness comes up here. Am I willing to set this straight? Where have I been wrong? Now, if you'll indulge me, I will share with you a piece of inventory just to show you how beautifully this works.

And this is fairly current inventory, by the way. Oh, there it is again. Gotta give you a little background. It was three years ago, I was at work, and my secretary called me and said, I just got a call here to be out at Porter Hospital. As soon as you can make it, your grandson's been badly burned. Well, that agitated me a little. I'll get through this. I got the porters, and they didn't know what I was talking about.

She sent me to the wrong hospital. I'm even more agitated. In my family, it's customary in any crisis we gather at home. In my family unit, we solve all of our problems as a unit. We don't want to be looking for anybody to go home. So I went home. Now, I live in a matriarchy. I hardly recommend it, guys. Find you on as soon as possible. There's no better way to live. I'm surrounded by women. And all you have to do to have a good successful life in a matriarchy is make sure they understand you are totally incompetent.

They know that. They just want to hear it from you. Okay. No, it really isn't that way, but some days it seems like that. So I got home and there's my wife, my older daughter, my younger daughter, who's the mother of the baby, my granddaughter, who was two, two and a half at the time, and the baby. And the baby's got his right hand bandaged. Now, all the rest of them are agitated. The baby's like a doofus, just smiling.

He thinks this is fine. Okay. It seems that the babysitter had dipped his hand in boiling water to stop him from crying. This happens because younger families, both of them are working. So when Kelly was working, a friend of hers would watch all the kids, and then when she was working, Kelly would watch all the kids. And on this day, Kelly had dropped the kids off and the lady got called to work and left them with her husband.

And somehow this baby's hand got dipped in boiling water. And we know that because it was like a glove. The skin is peeled off from here forward. And there was no question about what had happened. Now, Kelly's on the phone with her husband, who didn't do this. People get confused by this. Mike didn't do it. The babysitter's husband did it, but she's on the phone with her husband. Now, I understand Mike is my son-in-law, and I love him dearly.

But he's kind of a doofus. He's a former rock musician out of the Barrios of Los Angeles. Tattooed top to bottom, pierced in places that scare me. You know, never physically abusive, but one time we did have to get a restraining order because he's mouthy. And Kelly wouldn't serve it, so I just backed away from the whole thing. Anyway, she's got him on the phone. And I'm agitated, and I can tell by the way she's talking to him, but he's blaming her for this.

It's that if you'd have been a good mother and been home with the kids instead of outworking, blah, blah, blah, blah. Well, there is within me a grizzly. And if my family's in danger, the grizzly comes out. And I'm watching this go on when a grizzly came out, and I snatched the phone out of her hand. I said, listen, you son of a bitch. And he said, who do you think you're talking to? That's like hitting a grizzly on the nose with a sharp stick.

I said, I'm talking to you, you son of a bitch. I am sick and tired of the way you treat my daughter and scare my grandchildren. And because the spirit works in me when I can't, I suddenly became fully and instantly aware that the only one scaring anybody at that moment was me. My older daughter is going, go dad, go. At Christ's times, I don't have time to think program. I must have the spirit work to get me through it.

And I knew right now I got to get out of here. I'm scaring the babies. I'm scaring my daughter. My wife knows what's going on because she's lived with me for a while. I had to get the last word in, so I threw the phone on the floor just so he'd understand clearly where I'm at. And I went on out the front door to pause and get the right daughter action, okay? And I made this prayer. Show me how to take a calling and tell them to view this guy.

I know I'm wrong. And it came to me instantly. He's the hardest worker I have ever seen. I mean, he really works hard. He doesn't know how to handle money. There's a number of things wrong, but he works harder than any human being I've ever met. He really loves his family. And he tries hard. And with that thought, I began to get okay. And began to realize what I was hearing from Kelly talking to him. And I talked to her later and she confirmed this.

He was telling her that he's getting ready to go over and kill this guy. And she's trying to talk him out of it. Since the restraining order, she went to therapy and he didn't. And I kind of feel sorry for the poor guy these days. She knows exactly what buttons to push and when to push him. And he doesn't have a chance. But I had interfered with it because she is really in trouble. If he goes and kills this guy, then she loses everything.

And I interfered with that. Four minutes? Okay. So I'm back in and hugged on the babies and settled them all down. And you'll notice the baby that's been burned hasn't come up yet. He's still just fine. He's laughing and carrying on. He's in grandma's arms. He don't care. What's the little burn between friends anyway? No. Now I had to go inventory this. I have to find out why this was such a threat to me. Because if I don't find out it'll happen again someday and I don't want this to happen.

I don't want to be separated from the man that my daughter loves. I don't want to be separated from the man that my granddaughter loves. I don't want her hearing me calling her daddy a son of a bitch. That's not right. So I did it and here's what it looks like. I'm pretty simple with inventory. If you've been trained otherwise, that's all there is to it. That's the first three columns who I'm mad at and why I'm mad at them and what it affects.

And the rest of it is an answer to those questions. And I'll walk them over because there's discovery here. And because Bo asked me to. I'm mad at Mike because of the way he treats my daughter. He's macho self-centered and won't help her. Silly already in it. This affects my security, my self-esteem and my ambition. I'm aware of my selfish because I don't want to be involved in their drama. That's pretty selfish. This is my family.

But I don't want to be in it. They brought their drama into my house. I don't want to be involved in it. Oh God. Self-seeking because if I don't take size, I'm going to look bad to my daughter and my wife. I'd rather avoid the situation. My friend Don Cois uses the term deliberate neglect. And I was caught up in that. I would rather avoid the situation. I'd help her get a restraining order and she wouldn't have it served to hell with it.

I'm going to pretend this doesn't happen. Intentional neglect is what he talks about. Intentional neglect. So I'm taking sides so I won't look bad. I'm not taking sides. I shouldn't even be taking sides, but I have. Where am I dishonest? To think that I shouldn't stand up for her. To think that any of this is my business. Other than providing a safe haven, if things get real bad, otherwise it's their problem. Hers and Mike's problem to solve.

Not mine. Where am I frightened? Because it forces me to take a stand and sometimes I'm afraid I'm going to take the wrong one, then my wife's going to be upset. And I'm frightened that their problem could affect my marriage. It sure could if I let it. Hear all the self coming out of there? Where's the baby involved here? Yeah. And I was 30 years sober at the time. Go ahead and change it. Let's see. I have a redhead joke.

No, I know.