

## Prequel

Alcoholics Anonymous has been more successful as a recovery methodology than anything else. With over 3,000,000 members in the North American region to its credit, AA stand above all other treatment or recovery processes for those afflicted with alcohol disorders. Following the success of AA over 200 fellowships have instituted the 12 step process into their philosophy. A close study of the actual mechanics inherent in these steps and the results one gets after active participation, deserves close study.

Around the turn of the 20th century several forms of evangelical Christian fellowships developed. Humanity has always possessed an inner drive to experience social belonging and to touch the divine. These groups fulfilled this striving to belong and feel good about one's life. Some of the most important of these were, the Emmanuel Group and the Jacoby Club. The organization of the most significance to AA was the Oxford Group. These groups had a number of things in common. They all had a strong membership structure. You were encouraged to attend and participate in many activities revolving around the group. This was not a Sunday only business, your whole life and family were drawn in and motivated toward achieving spiritual goals for yourself and those closest to you.

The groups were Christian in nature but non-denominational. You could profess any Christian faith and be accepted even if you were alcoholic if you were willing to submit to the dictates of the group.

Meetings took place almost every night but not necessarily in Churches. There were times the groups would need to meet in areas large enough for auditorium size crowds. The U.S. headquarters, was a multimillion-dollar establishment on Michigan's Mackinac Island, with room for 1,000 visitors and then there were many group members who would have house meetings. Sometimes someone would have an event lasting the whole weekend at their house. T. Henry Williams' home in Akron became an important gathering place for early alcoholics in the Oxford Group.

As a precursor to 12 step work people were encouraged to spread the group's Christian message. If a member could recruit other people into the fellowship this was seen as important, witnessing to others about their life change due to the Oxford Group processes and the value of membership was an important practice and was encouraged.

There was also a very prevalent improvement in one's quality of life. A participating individual's attitude and perspective would become more positive. Negative life situations would often be overcome as a result.

At their core all these groups had spiritual practices and exercises.

The basic tenants of the Oxford Group were:

**Deflation** - To successfully live life to a good purpose one must have God's help. One's own power and direction was insufficient.

**Submission** - One must dedicate their life to God's will. A demonstration of obedience was performed through prayer sometimes in the company of group members.

**Restitution** - One was expected to attempt to repair damaged relationships and restore any property or money that was owed. All outstanding debts and conflicts were to be corrected to the best of one's ability.

**Confession** - Each member confessed their sins and shortcomings to another group member or members.

**Seek Divine Guidance** - A process of prayer and especially meditation were taught so that one could try to receive guidance from God in guided thought or through inspiration.

**Witnessing/Helping Others** - It was always very important to try to pass on this message of spiritual living to others. It was apparent that to do so was extremely beneficial to the individual in this activity.

The various groups applied these practices differently than others but the basic principles were common to them all. Many of the down and out crowd who became heavily involved in these groups were restored to an effective life. As the fellowships grew people from all walks of life became members and profited from the spiritual shot in the arm these group practices provided.

As these fellowships flourished a number of alcoholics were exposed to and participated in these groups and were able to sober up as a result. This was of greater significance than anyone at that time realized.

Alcoholism or Inebriate Syndrome or whatever the diagnosis proffered at that time, was considered a fatal malady. Most hospitals would be loath to even admit someone for addiction or alcoholism because of the extremely small chance of recovery. The few treatment centers that existed at that time for treatment of alcohol or drug dependence were using methods that would now be seen at best as almost completely ineffective or even barbaric.

(See William White's book "Slaying the Dragon")

If the circumstances were right for someone, if they believed that they had little hope and were willing to become enmeshed in group activities and leadership direction they would sometimes sober up. It seemed that a complete personality change had taken place in the individual. People would account for this by saying, "He has become filled with the spirit" or "he has found Jesus". Sobriety would last as long as intensive participation was maintained. When that participation fell away so would one's sobriety.

There were books like "What is the Oxford Group" that was released in 1933 and that came close, but a handbook or guide of specific spiritual exercises that would produce the desired sobriety was not readily available.

Enter Bill Wilson, a drunk that sobered up at the Market Street Mission in New York City and the Calvary Church Mission with some Oxford Groupers. He buys into enough of the process to sober up for good. He somehow knows he needs to confine his conviction to testifying about his experience to other drunks. With many failed attempts he and those he assembled stumble into a combination of spiritual processes that seem to work for the alcoholic. Eventually he finds people desperate to separate from alcohol and willing to try the Oxford Group approach and those he is working with start to see some success.

Soon a group of drunk squad Oxford Groupers grows up around him. As the numbers increase it becomes apparent that there will need to be some kind of standardization to this process. Many mistakes were made and it was decided that by publishing their idea of what worked the best they could develop a blueprint that would help other alcoholics. Little did they know that they had just taken a historic step and that they were about to create the architecture for over 200 – 12 step organizations.

The future would prove that people with a variety of addictive illnesses, many types of obsessive compulsive behaviors and numerous emotional and psychological disorders could profit from adherence to these practices. And depending on the individual's level of commitment, could radically alter the direction and quality of their lives.

The text Alcoholics Anonymous or the Big Book, as it is popularly called became the principle document for a way of life where countless people would find freedom and recovery.

Over time all religions and spiritual systems experience dilution. Over the course of time some practitioners will find strict adherence to processes or direction less and less necessary. This happened to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous within the first two decades. By the 1950's the emphasis on restitution, prayer and meditation and witnessing had become secondary to attendance at the fellowship meeting.

As this change evolved it became much easier for the non-alcoholic to become a member and for the alcoholic member to skip on some of the spiritual exercises that would be most conducive to their recovery.

Based upon historical membership studies we know there was a greater level of long term continuance and success with the 12 step process then there is today. In some areas and meetings become a revolving door where many cycle through for a short period and consequently find little permanent success. Some will finally come, stay and work the 12 step program and become successful even after many relapses. Some will become convinced that this way of life is not for them, or that this way of life will not work for them, never realizing that they have failed to put into practice the spiritual exercises that define success. This is due to a migration away from the core principles of the 12 steps. Why have most groups allowed these standards to lapse so significantly? Why do most groups no longer hold you accountable for adherence to the most effective processes? A cafeteria style mentality has blossomed; "take what you need and leave the rest" is an often repeated myth that can be heard in many 12 step meetings.

Presently addictive illness is the largest threat to the health of Americans today. Not even cancer and heart disease combined approaches the numbers afflicted with this aggressive, progressive and life dissolving malady. Between 10% and 15% of Americans suffer from it and 1 in 4 families are affected by it. The loss of years of life and the cost of medical interventions for the sufferer are staggering. But because of the misunderstanding, stigma and discrimination that exists, it can be almost impossible except convinced that one should engage in or even find the most effective solution in 12 step fellowships.

A conservative in depth study of the principals, practices and philosophy of the Big Book is long overdue. A genuine understanding of why it has been so successful for some should be paramount to those who suffer from or are affected by alcoholism and addiction. Not everyone who is a problem drinker or has a substance abuse problem is an alcoholic. We will explore this crucial question in further detail later, however if you are truly alcoholic, professional treatment is seldom successful on its own and almost always results in a recommendation to join and participate in a 12 step fellowship. This book is intended to provide the tools that will help you understand and develop a 12 step recovery solution.

### *Part 1 Foreword*

In this book we plan to go through the text Alcoholics Anonymous, page by page, line by line, and review the implications of the information in the book. We will be looking at the history, the practical application of the material and the spiritual instructions. Anyone that hasn't really studied the book Alcohol Anonymous and suffers from some kind of addictive disease, or even obsessive-compulsive disorder, could do well by paying attention to the things that you can learn in this book.

The author does not speak for Alcoholics Anonymous and is not admitting to membership in Alcoholics Anonymous. What we want to do is share some of the understanding through many years using this book as a personal tool for recovery and spiritual enhancement. If anyone wishes to disagree with our conclusion's that is fine, we claim no status as historians or experts on AA. If when quoting history we get something wrong I would suggest that the importance of this book is not to be exacting in historical details, but to offer one view on the implications of actually doing what the book says to do.

And there's nothing official about this. This is just sharing our experience with the text.

Let's start a little bit with the history of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. In the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous there were two groups. There was one in Akron and one in Cleveland. They were really the drunk squads of the Oxford group, AA as such was formed yet. In these groups what was happening was more and more they were being marginalized or, they were marginalizing themselves out of the mainstream of the Oxford Group. The alcoholics were sticking together and at times upsetting the mainstream Oxford groupers. Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob had begun working with drunks almost exclusively and that caused a split. The methods that the Oxford Group worked in the drunks they were working with very well so they would be maintained after this split. So it came time for Bill Wilson to establish these strictly for the men he was working with. He decided that we really needed a text. To write down a bit of the history and a bit of the recovery program as they knew it. Around 1938 Bill started putting together the first chapters of this book, and only after the book was published did the groups start calling themselves Alcoholics Anonymous. The birth of the book was a birth of the fellowship as we know it today.

Let's start on the dust jacket. Many times when you read a book, you'll go to page one. That is a huge mistake in this book. Because if you do that with this book you will miss some really important information contained in the forewords and the doctor's opinion.

*Originally published in 1939 when AA membership numbered about one hundred. Alcoholics Anonymous has steadily grown in readership. By the time the second edition appeared in 1955, membership had reached over a hundred and fifty thousand and the big book, AA member's fond title for their basic text had reached a distribution of more than 300,000.* That's just the first paragraph on the dust jacket and what it's saying is there is over a hundred and fifty thousand members of Alcoholics Anonymous and they had published three hundred thousand books. That is one recovered alcoholic for every two books that came off the printer. The reason we are mentioning this is membership in Alcoholics Anonymous today we have somewhere between three million and four and a half million, depending on what statistics you use. We don't think there's one recovery for every two books that's printed anymore. This is one of the things that lead us to believe that recovery rates were much greater in the earlier days of Alcoholics Anonymous than they are today. So if you sought and gained membership in Alcoholics Anonymous in the first ten years of AA, you stood a much greater chance of recovery than you do today.

There are many reasons for that and we will cover some of them. *At the time of the third edition in March 1976, the worldwide membership of AA was estimated at one million or more. Copies of Alcoholics Anonymous in circulation exceeded one million, four hundred and fifty thousand. In 1995, the general service conference approved the recommendation the first hundred and sixty-four pages of the big book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the preface, the forewords, the doctor's opinion, Doctor Bob's nightmares, and the appendices remain as is.* That was a smart move because there's been a lot of push over the years to update this book. Many people say that it is written from a sexist point of view. A lot of the language is archaic. Yet, there are a lot of members who don't want to give over the power to someone or some committee to make changes in this book. It's almost sacred among certain members in Alcoholics Anonymous. Even so, there have been a number of minor changes in the books as they've been printed as they've gone through new printings and different editions. The risk of removing even a little bit of the effectiveness that's inherent in this book is probably too great to take.

There have been a lot of decisions that have come out of New York GSO to put out literature. There is a push to publish more and more material and they have. Much of this material does not line up with the material in the Bog Book. Take the book Living Sober. That book is getting an unbelievable amount of criticism because there are so many parts of it that go in complete contradiction of the book Alcoholics Anonymous. When you lay it side by side with the book Alcoholics Anonymous, it's almost talking about another recovery program entirely. The same people who published or approved that are the people who probably would be put in charge of making editorial changes to the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Many members believe that you could not find a qualified body today at the GSO level that could be trusted to make changes. AA has made it very difficult to make any changes in this book by requiring a majority decision by the groups. For a fellowship like Alcoholics Anonymous to get seventy-five percent of the members to show up to vote would be a very difficult thing. That protection has made it near impossible to make significant changes in the book and that's probably as really smart decision. They've been allowed to change things like the dust jacket and add forwards and that has caused uproar within the membership itself. People believe they're always worse than the edition before. So many in the membership think it would be making a big mistake approve somebody to rewrite this and modernize it. A review of the editions and printings will show the deteriorations in the clear message of the 12 step recovery process. The authors of the changes are people who quite possibly have not experienced the recovery process in this book. They know it intellectually, but they don't know it experientially. People without their own recovery experience through application of the 12 step process shouldn't be placed in a position to make any editorial changes in it.

*The section on personal stories was updated with new stories in the second and third editions in order to reflect the wider age range and different life experiences of alcoholics over the years since 1935 when Bill W. met Doctor Bob and the message of AA was born. As Bill W. wrote in a 1953 letter, the story section in the big book is far more important than most of us think. It is our principle means of identifying with the reader outside AA. It is written equivalent, of hearing speakers at an AA meeting. It is our show window of result. Continuing this policy, the fourth edition includes 24 new stories that provide contemporary sharing for newcomers seeking recovery from alcoholism in AA during the years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Seventeen stories are retained from the third edition, including the pioneers of AA section, which help the reader remain linked to AA's historic roots and show how early members applied the simple but profound program that*

helps alcoholics get sober today. Approximately twenty-one million copies of the first three editions of Alcoholics Anonymous have been distributed. OK, twenty-one millions copies and there's four million recoveries. The amounts of books being published are growing. And the amount of recoveries don't equate to the way it was in the early days, one recovery for every 2 books.

*It is expected that the new fourth edition will place importance on passing on AA's basic message of recovery. The fourth edition has been approved by the general service conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in the hope that many more may be led to recovery by reading it's, it's explanation of the AA program and it's varied examples of personal experience, which demonstrate that the AA program works.* We believe that the story section is vitally important.

We believe that identification can be, "yes I am an alcoholic and I need what this book offers" This is a very important truth to cling to, if you are indeed afflicted with, with alcoholism. There's a lot of diversity in the stories. And somewhere in there you should be able to find something that you relate to very strongly if you are an alcoholic.

However there have been periods of time where people use the stories for purposes that they really weren't written for. The stories, although they explain a little bit about how people recover, cannot be detailed enough, to offer a program of recovery. And there's been many stories that people have chosen to latch onto and use the spiritual exercises in those stories and, and believe that they are practicing an AA program. One of them was Freedom from Bondage. In Freedom from Bondage, it gives some really good exercises in forgiving someone that you're resentful for. However doing the exercise out of the story is not working a recovery program. It's basically a spiritual technique. There have been times where the stories were misused or people put a lot more emphasis on the information in them then in applying the 12 steps to situations. The stories are for identification purposes. Once someone has identified themselves as an alcoholic, believes in the truth of their personal powerlessness, it's time identification is vitally important. But once you've identified once you're hooked it's time to act like this is a text book.

Let's say you wanted to learn and experience algebra. There are some things in your life that you really needed algebra and you started going to a bunch of algebra classes. However, you never opened the text book and you never did any of the exercises, so you never solved any of the problems at the end of the chapter. You would just go and show up at algebra class so you could talk about algebra all the time. Would you get a real experience of algebra that way?

That's what happens a lot of times at recovery meetings. People go there and talk about a whole lot of things. But if you want to solve some problems in your life, if you want to learn how the first one hundred or one thousand people recovered from alcoholism, then you need to work with this book as a text book. We believe that this is not the only way that somebody can recover. There's a lot of other avenues out there. However, none of them has been as successful with as many people.

Many times people claim there's a cure for alcoholism on tv or there's a pill you can take for a cure. But if you look into the statistics and the efficacy of those methodologies or those medications, you're, you're going to find them wanting compared to the four million recoveries in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Is this the only thing for everyone? We don't think that's inherent in this recovery philosophy, or even the text itself. However it offers a program of recovery that's successful. The recovery program as it's laid out in this text. Let's move to the title page, where it says Alcoholics Anonymous at the top.

The first promise is *the story of how many thousands of men and women have recovered from alcoholism.* Now there is a huge controversy that's been going on for a very long time...recovered, recovering, and recovery....there's different ways different people use the meanings of those terms. There are the people that believe we're always recovering and there are the people that believe that we're recovered but we're not cured. The book Alcoholics Anonymous says that if you follow, instructions, if you follow directions, and started helping other people to be recovered alcoholics.

The difference between recovery and cured is this...if you're recovered from an illness, that means the symptoms of the illness are removed. If you're cured of an illness, that means the illness itself is removed. With alcoholism as with drug addiction, and a lot of the addictive illnesses, we don't believe that you're cured. We believe there's still a part of you, whether it's in your mind or your body that is not one hundred percent back to normal. However the symptoms of the illness can be removed. You're not drinking anymore and maybe some of the grosser character defects that were being promoted by your alcoholism are much more under control. You're a lot more level-headed, you've become dependable at work. You're not blowing up your personal relationships. A lot of those things come back into line after working a recovery program. And if that's taken place we see no problem in you identifying yourself as a recovered alcoholic. As long as you know that you're not cured. Your liver and pancreas are still not going to be able to tolerate alcohol in any form at all. And if you back away from the spiritual disciplines inherent in this book you certainly could be placing yourself in a position for relapse.

The book says we are not cured, what we have is a daily reprieve based on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.

## The Preface

*This is the fourth edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The first edition appeared in April 1939 and in the following sixteen years, more than three thousand copies went into circulation. The second edition published in nineteen-five, 1955, reached a total of more than one million, one hundred and fifty, uh, thousand five hundred copies. The third edition, which came off the press in 1976, achieved a circulation of approximately nineteen million, five hundred and fifty thousand*

in all formats. Because this book has become the basic text of our society, and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exists strong sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. We want to point out again the fact that this is the basic text for our society.

What we have seen happen is, a lot of people who want to learn what about the twelve-step recovery process go to the book, the Twelve and Twelve. It even makes sense; the book is titled, and it's published by Alcoholics Anonymous, and is called "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions."

So if you're trying to learn about the twelve-step program, wouldn't you go to the "twelve and twelve"? However that's really misleading because the "twelve and twelve" was published to broaden and deepen the twelve steps as they were already laid out in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. They're basically essays on the steps; they're not necessarily instructional. How important is a textbook? If you're learning a discipline, don't you need to pay the real strict attention to the basic text? We believe that you have to do that.

*The first portion of this volume, describing the AA recovery program, has been left largely untouched in the course of revisions made for the second, third and fourth editions. The section called The Doctor's Opinion has been kept intact, just as it was originally written in 1939 by the late Dr. William B. Silkworth, our society's great medical benefactor. The second edition added the appendices, the twelve traditions and the directions for getting in touch with AA, but the chief change was in the section of personal stories, which was expanded to reflect the fellowship's growth.* There are changes with society; there are changes in a lot of different things over time, so it's a good idea to update some of these stories. Some of the best stories are the ones from the first edition. There's only a few of them that are still published in the fourth edition. However, they are still in print. You can get them in publications from Alcoholics Anonymous World Service. Some of the first stories are very interesting because they detail what the recovery process looked like in the early days. There was a lot more emphasis on the recovery process and a lot less emphasis on the fellowship. Because of this we see higher rates of recoveries in the early days.

*Doctor Bob's nightmare and one other personal history from the first edition were retained intact. Three were edited and one of these was re-titled. New versions of three stories were written with new titles. Thirty completely new stories were added, and the story section was divided into three parts, under the same headings that are now used. In the third edition, part one, Pioneers of AA, was left unchanged. The stories in part two, they stopped in time, are carried over from the second edition. Eight new stories were added. In part three, they lost nearly all. Eight stories were retained. Five new ones were added. The fourth edition includes the twelve concepts for world service, and revises the three sections of personal stories as follows...one new story has been added to part one, and two that originally appeared in part three have been repositioned there. Six stories have been deleted. Six of the stories in part two have been carried over. Eleven new ones have been added and eleven taken out. Part three now includes twelve new stories, eight were removed in addition to the two that were transferred to part one.*

*The changes made over the years in the big book, AA member's fond nickname for this volume, have had the same purpose, to represent the current membership of Alcoholics Anonymous more accurately and thereby to reach more alcoholics. If you have a drinking problem, we hope that you may pause in reading one of the forty-two personal stories and think, "yes, that happened to me" or, more importantly, "yes, I've felt like that" or most, important, "yes, I believe this program can work for me too."*

Over the years, there have been a whole lot of twelve step fellowships that have been started. There are probably over 250 different twelve-step fellowships today. They all borrow the twelve steps from Alcoholics Anonymous. All these fellowships would do well to look at the foundational document of twelve-step recovery, the book Alcoholics Anonymous. In this is the clearest set of instructions to follow for recovery that exists.

These first editions can be very expensive, especially with a dust jacket in good condition. The author knew someone who had Hank Pankhurst's big book. Hank was one of the original authors of a story in the first edition. He helped write the chapter to employers and he lent his office to Bill Wilson for the writing of the book. Unfortunately, he drank and that took a lot of his status away back in the early days of AA. But having that book would be important; it probably was the third big book to come off the printing press. He wouldn't say what he got for it but it could have been substantial.

*"We at Alcoholics Anonymous are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book." Precisely how we have recovered" is changed in the font and we believe it was so that you paid close attention to the statement. "Through them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication will be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone to better understand the alcoholic. Many did not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. Now besides, we are sure that our way of living has its advantages for all. It is important that we remain anonymous, for we are too few at present to handle the overwhelming number of personal appeals which may result from this publication."* They were overestimating the immediate response to this. One of the things that they did was they put a bunch of postcards together. They these printed and they did it on borrowed money and fraudulent stock. Bill and Hank printed up blank stock certificates and filled them out to raise money and pay expenses. They put together postcards, and on the postcards they basically said "We've got a cure for alcoholism" and they sent them out to all these doctors. Somebody gave them a list of doctors, they sent them out and they were waiting for all the money to come in. They arranged to have a whole bunch of volunteers to mail these books all over the country. They got three responses and all of them were so illegible they could not understand the writing. The doctors that responded were so drunk, that they couldn't even tell what address to send the books to. They were really disappointed in the early sales of this book.

Historians put together book reviews from 1939, on the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. So there was about twenty or thirty book reviews that were done in various publications. Almost universally, they absolutely trashed this book. They basically called it witch doctor stuff and these people obviously don't know what they are talking about. That's another thing that you don't hear a lot about, in conference approved literature, but it was, uh considered not very significant of a publication at all. When, in fact, it's turned out to be one of the most significant publications in the last hundred years. Time would tell how important this book would be.

When it says "it's important that we remain anonymous", they were worried about anonymity in the early days for a number of different reasons. One was, they really thought that their lives would be turned upside down alcoholics seeking help. It was going to happen a lot slower than they thought.

*"Being mostly business or professional folk, we cannot well carry on our occupations in such an event."* There were some things that were not really true in this book. Business or professional folk....that's very true but most of them weren't working. They were coming off the battlefields of alcoholism, and the smoke was still settling. It was the depression era and there were very few jobs. *"we want it understood that our alcoholic work is an avocation"*, this is something that they were not going to charge money for. *"When writing or speaking publicly about alcoholism, we urge each of our fellowship to omit his personal name, and has designated himself instead as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous."* That tradition is important too today. The last thing Alcoholics Anonymous needs is somebody speaking for it in an official capacity.

You look at all the people who are coming up with cures for alcoholism and you can see what kind of egotistical crackpots there are out there. This is actually a very good, um, a very, very good tradition. This also shows how far-seeing Bill Wilson was. He was working on the traditions as he was finishing up the steps. He was working on the twelve concepts for world service as he was finishing up the traditions. He could see further ahead than anyone else in the fellowship. He was a visionary.

This tradition states that if you're going to speak as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, you should omit your last name. They started to use their first name and their last initial. When you look back in the history there was a time when people didn't care much about anonymity. They would put their picture in the paper and a big ad "if you want to join Alcoholics Anonymous, call Fred Smith, at 772-3535". There were some people in the Cleveland and Akron area who fought very hard against a lot of these traditions and there were a lot of groups that weren't paying attention to them. It's something that Bill Wilson fought for from 1940 until 1955 or so, when they were ratified. He fought very strongly for them to be made official as far as Alcoholics Anonymous policy is concerned. There have been times when people put paper bags over their heads when they've appeared on television.

Certainly, the spiritual principles of traditional eleven and twelve are, are wonderful traditions and very important for personal recovery.

*"We ask the press also to observe this request for other, for otherwise, they shall be greatly handicapped."* There was a period of time in our history where the press really respected the AA tradition. Letters would go out to all major press agencies, newspapers and radio stations once a year detailing the policy anonymity. It's unfortunate in today's day and age, anything that will sell copy, anything that will get you five more minutes on the TV stations, is fair game. We have seen many major breaks in anonymity with show business, personalities and other famous people. There was an individual in Texas who kept statistics on anonymity breaks, and his statistics show that ninety percent of the people that break their anonymity relapse. These are people that have specifically said that they were members of AA, and use their full name, or people were able to recognize who they were. These are people who spoke as a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Saying you are in recovery or saying you are a recovered alcoholic or saying that you have alcoholism has nothing to do with an AA tradition break. That's an outside issue. And AA does not own the term alcoholism or recovery. So you're free to do that. As a matter of fact it really is time for people to stand up and if they can help the cause of recovery, cause of available and affordable treatment, the cause of insurance reform or the removal of stigma for people that have alcoholism it's time to do so. There are a number of people that are doing it and they're doing it right, and they're not getting in trouble with Alcoholics Anonymous because they're following the tradition but they are getting up and they're saying I'm a drug addict who's been clean for fifteen years. .. I sought treatment, treatment works, and recovery is possible.

The problem with stigma is great. Let's say you're a doctor... there was a study done on how empathetic you are toward alcoholics, how much sympathy you have toward alcoholics, how much compassion you have toward alcoholics. They interviewed people in first year medical school all the way up through third year residency. They found the first year medical student had a lot of compassion for alcoholism, they wanted to help. They wanted to learn more. By the time they were third year residents, their compassion unbelievably diminished. They were pretty much tired of alcoholics. And what happens unfortunately, in law enforcement, in criminal justice, in medical situations, are these people see the chronic stages of alcoholism. They see the alcoholics at their absolute worst. And they see it over, and over and over again. That contributes to the stigma of alcoholism. Anyone who's in recovery really needs to know that it's their responsibility whenever they can, to help combat that view of alcoholism and of recovery. Because recovery is real. And treatment works. And there's hope, and there does not need to be wholesale discrimination or condemnation toward alcoholics. There are sober alcoholics all around you. You just don't know it.

Because sometimes it's not in their best interest to stand up and say hey, "by the way, you know, I'm a recovered alcoholic", that doesn't happen very much in the workplace...doesn't happen at the rotary club...but it's something that people need to take responsibility for because recovered people are the ones who can make a statement. Trying to

advocate with anonymity concerning 12 step fellowship memberships, for the de-stigmatization of alcoholism and drug recovery is important. We need to move forward some of the social and political processes to something that's less discriminatory against people in recovery

In 1956, the American Medical Association said that alcoholism was a disease. Why don't people treat it that way? Very few people treat alcoholism like they would treat cancer, or heart disease, or hyper-tension, or diabetes. They treat it like a moral issue and not a medical one.

Even people who sometimes treat you for it, even people who should really know better, make decisions about treatment and recovery that don't look like the same type of decisions that would be made if they were dealing with cancer or hyper-tension.

Current practices with some insurance companies are, they will not pay for in-patient treatment for alcoholism unless you've failed at out-patient treatment a number of times. They'll approve for you to go to an intensive out-patient three nights a week for six weeks. And until you've shown that this hasn't worked, they're not going to pay for in-patient. If this was heart disease, could you imagine someone saying "well, we really need for you to go on this medication...it really doesn't work that well" and have a couple of heart attacks before they'll admit you to the hospital to do the surgery that you really need. Would, would society allow them to get away with that?

That's one case of discriminatory treatment. Our public policies really need to be tightened up. They're moving forward with parity laws but there's a whole lot more work to do before the treatment is available for everyone that needs it.

There might be treatment out there but it might be insufficient. You might be in a much more critical stage of alcoholism where out-patient might not really work. You might be trying to treat a laceration with a Band-Aid.

No one wants insurance policies to go up, but many studies have been done that show for every one dollar of treatment, society itself gets back anywhere from eight to sixteen dollars. They get it back through a spectrum of things. From decreased recidivism in the criminal justice system costs, and health care costs at charity hospitals for the treatment of the acute symptomology of alcoholism. If it's caught earlier and someone gets into recovery these expenses can be avoided. There's many ways that society will save money in the future with better awareness. Some politicians and people revolving around the government now that understand this and are advocating and lobbying for much more comprehensive, alcoholism and drug addiction treatment policies. They're just up against the insurance lobbyists who are very powerful. It's going to have to come down to the country's saying we are just not going to be able to afford paying for the ravages of alcoholism any more, and they're going to need to figure out how to pay for treatment.

Society should start making it affordable for people to get the treatment that they need.

*"we are not, we are not an organization in the conventional sense of the word. There are no dues or fees whatsoever. The only requirement is an honest desire to stop drinking."* Notice the word honest desire to stop drinking. That was changed in the traditions when they were ratified in '55. In the earlier days, an honest desire to stop drinking meant a lot of different things in a lot of different groups. In some groups it meant, are you willing to engage in the recovery processes as we know it. Are you willing to do inventory? Are you willing to make amends? Are you willing to share your defects of character? Are you willing to help others? That showed an honest desire to stop drinking, They didn't work with anyone didn't mean business. *"We are not aligned with any particular faith, sect or denomination, nor do we oppose any one. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted. We shall be interested to hear from those who are getting results from this book, particularly from those who have commenced the work with other alcoholics. We should like to be helpful in such cases."* Understand that they really thought they were going to send this book all around the country. People were going to use the book to get sober and become recovered alcoholics. That's what they expected. What in actuality happened was this textbook really needed to be taught. Let's say you had a textbook for how to fly an F-17 and someone gave you that textbook and you read it. And then they said, "all right, the fighter jet is over in the parking lot...taker out for a spin." It would be a disaster.

They found that the same was true with their book. Yes, this is a textbook, but it needs to be taught. They found the most success when someone could sit down with somebody else and identify as an alcoholic and then explain the recovery process. Alcoholic Anonymous meetings spread by a member of one group moving to another area. Out of the Akron area, Cleveland started. Out of the Cleveland area, Chicago started. Out of the New York area, Philadelphia started. It happened with different members going to different areas and starting different groups. So they were under a mistaken assumption when they put this down in the foreword of the first edition. *"Inquiry's by scientific, medical and religious societies will be welcomed."* As the fellowship began to grow, you could not ignore the amount of recoveries. They built up fairly quickly to significant numbers. The people of religion, the people of medicine, the people of the psychiatric communities really started to have to take notice.

#### Forward 2nd Edition

It's really no great secret that addictive illness, alcoholism, drug dependence, is quite possibly the number one health threat in the country today. The book Alcoholics Anonymous since it was printed in 1939, has proven to be about the most successful tool available to treat addictive illness. There's been many twelve-step groups that have sprung up using the concepts that were first laid out in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. So an exploration of this book is a very valid venture. You also know a whole lot about this book. So um last week we got thru um basically the foreword to the first edition. We're now covering the foreword to the second edition.

When talking about the challenge of alcoholism you need to know that intellectual knowledge is not going to be sufficient. If you could overcome addictive illness with an education in it then you would go to class to learn how to overcome it and you would be fine. And, the fact of the matter, recovery, alcoholism is fraught with relapse and there's a reason for that. With the publication on the book Alcoholics Anonymous, they had it right; they nailed the problem and the solution. No matter who you are, if you are a legitimate treatment provider, if you're someone who has experience in recovery, you are going to know that the concepts that they assembled back in the late 30's are still valid today. They are what needs to be experienced for a permanent long-lasting recovery from alcoholism or, or any additive illness.

Alcoholism is more of a spiritual problem than it is a substance problem. And they knew that back then and they knew what you needed to do to get your spirit right so that you could remain in recovery. Quitting drinking is not really the answer to alcoholism. Quitting drugs is not really the answer to drug addiction. There's a deeper underlying problem within the person's spirit that needs to be addressed, and there has not been a text written on substance abuse recovery that equals this text in validity. The text is basically a pathway to experience recovery yourself.

This is valid for almost any form of addiction or even obsessive-compulsive disorder. But when you're looking at alcoholism, it's an un-orthodox illness. It affects you physically. It affects you mentally. It affects you spiritually, and the recovery process for alcoholism is a very unorthodox recovery process.

When you have a disease or an illness, you go to the doctor and whether it be chemo or antibiotics, there's usually a well laid out plan that doctors can offer you. For alcohol recovery, whether it's in-patient, out-patient, medications, therapy, it's addressed in many ways professionally. The issue is it's a chronic illness. It's going to be with you the rest of your life.

You need to remain focused on the tools that work, especially the ones in this book. You need to remain focused on the fact that you have alcoholism and there's a certain way you need to live that will be conducive to recover. That's really unorthodox; you're not going to find that in many other illnesses. So there's a lot of misunderstanding about alcoholism. Many people misunderstand it. People that treat you for it sometimes have great misunderstandings about the recovery process. They really think that all you need to do is watch out for your triggers, or all you need to do is go to out-patient therapy for a year. That is really misunderstanding the nature of the illness and what the participation needs to be to remain in a recovered state.

Let's call it the real alcoholic, 'because that's what they call it in this book. The real alcoholic, as opposed to someone who has a drinking problem, is someone who's dependent on alcohol. Dependence and powerlessness is the definer of the real alcoholic. When they stop drinking, that's when a lot of the spiritual, emotional and mental problems start, so it's not only a matter of separating from the alcohol. That's the very beginning, and that's necessary. But with separation from alcohol without a spiritual recovery process is experienced, what will happen to the real alcoholic is one of three things; 1 They'll commit suicide. 2 They'll go insane and be locked up. 3 They'll drink again. That's if they don't engage in a recovery process. There are few exceptions to that rule. There are exceptions. Some people just don't drink using an amazing amount of willpower, but when you look at the quality of their mental, emotional and spiritual life, you see that they really are dying an alcoholic death because there's no quality to their life. They are at best, very cranky. At worst, tyrannical in their lives.

Understanding what's in this book is of the highest importance. When you look at treatment in America today, it started with the Minnesota twelve-step abstinence-based model. Treatment was a bunch of people in AA who got together and said, "You know, we really need an acute care facility for some of these AA's. We need to lock them up. And we need to pound down these concepts of recovery." We need to just inundate them with these concepts of recovery because they're not to be trusted, they're not capable of understanding and applying recovery by just getting involved in the fellowship. So, all of a sudden, these treatment methodologies started. Now, we've learned a whole lot over the years. However legitimate recovery treatment centers have to use the twelve-step model or else they are really doing a disservice to whoever their clients are. The twelve steps may not be the only way. But it's been the most successful way for the most amount of people. So, to overlook it is pretty irresponsible for a treatment provider, because you cannot ignore the success of the twelve-step model. So it's been legitimized in the medical community. It's been legitimized with the religious community's. You just can't turn your head at four million sober alcoholics in North America due to the twelve step fellowships.

We now move into the Foreword of the Second Edition.

Figures given in this foreword describe the fellowship as it was in 1955. It had been about 16 years since the first printing of the first edition. It was time for another printing. They were really selling a lot of these books and they needed to update the stories. They added another foreword. *"Since the original foreword to this book was written in 1939, a wholesale miracle has taken place. Our earliest printing voiced the hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination. Already, continues the early text, twos and threes and fives of us have sprung up in other communities. Sixteen years have elapsed between the first printing of this book and the presentation in 1955 of our second edition. In that brief space, Alcoholics Anonymous has mushroomed into nearly six thousand groups whose membership is far above a hundred and fifty thousand recovered alcoholics. Groups are to be found in each of the United States and all the provinces of Canada. Alcoholics Anonymous has flourishing communities in the British Isles, Scandinavian countries, South Africa, South America, Mexico, Alaska, Australia and Hawaii. All told, promising beginnings have been made in some fifty foreign countries and US possessions. Some are just now taking shape in Asia. Many of our friends encourage us by saying that this is but a beginning, only the augury of a much larger future ahead."* They had great growth, especially after a number of press articles on AA came out. An important one was the Jack Alexander article. There was a number of articles that said there's now a hope for alcoholism. What would

traditionally happen is, you would have a group somewhere with maybe five members, the Saturday evening post article would come out and all of a sudden you'd go from five to two hundred and fifty members in the course of a couple of weeks. Back in that period of time they very quickly had to hone their twelve-step skills. How do you offer a recovery program to so many people coming in so quickly? I'm sure they made a lot of mistakes. But overall they did a pretty good job. They treated it as triage and they took their twelve-step work extremely seriously. Unfortunately, today, you know AA Intergroup can get a phone call where someone is asking for help and they'll have a really hard time tracking somebody down who's willing to go on that twelve-step call. That has really changed over the years. In the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous, so many people were available for one on one work. They would go get them. They would put them in the hospital. They would stay with them through the treatment. They would get them to meetings. They would get people to work them through the steps. It was very, very intensive in the beginning and that, that I believe, led the amazing growth that they had in the first fifteen or twenty years of Alcoholics Anonymous. I think that's an lesson for us too. I think that if, if you are a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and you aren't available or doing these twelve-step calls, that's something that you probably should look at.

I think there's a couple of factors that have led to the decrease in twelve-step calls. There was the advent of the detoxes, the rehabs and your ability to go into an ER and get detoxed. When this book was written there were less places where you could go to get some kind of help. I also think that along the way certain people have gotten kind of lazy. They've allowed the professionals to handle all of the twelve-step work. It's not a vital function of a twelve-step group any more, the way it was in the beginning. One of the factors that lead to the higher amount of relapses within twelve-step groups today is directly proportional to how busy they are about the business of recovery and the work involved.

If you're doing 10 hours a week on recovery activities, your chances of staying sober are way less than somebody who that's spending fifteen or twenty hours a week on the same type activities. It's directly proportional. So it's something for current twelve-step fellowship members to look at. Are you busy? Are you available? Are you reaching out? Are you looking for places where you can be helpful? Or are you just showing up at meetings, drinking coffee and sharing about your day?

You can hear folks say, "Well, we just don't go into bars and drag people off bar stools any more. We just don't do that." "We just don't take people to hospitals and stay with them anymore, they can come here if they really want it." As far as a recovery program, that's a copout and that's somebody justifying their laziness.

I don't think anybody would say "go to a bar and drag people off of the bar stools. However, there are sick and suffering individuals all over who have not been offered an adequate presentation of the recovery process. What they do is they say "it's attraction, not a promotion". That, that's Alcoholics Anonymous' media position, their public relations position. That has nothing to do with twelve-step attitudes and actions.

That's a misunderstanding, that's taking a public relations statement and making it about you because it's much more convenient not to have to be busy.

*"The spark that was to flare into the first AA group was struck in Akron, Ohio, in June '35 during a talk between a New York stock broker and an Akron physician. Six months earlier the broker had been relieved of his drink obsession by a sudden spiritual experience following a meeting with an alcoholic friend who had been in contact with the Oxford groups of that day."* That of course was Ebby Thatcher.

Until this book was written, until a group started in Cleveland, Ohio, uh, the official name of the fellowship really wasn't Alcoholics Anonymous. They were a loosely associated group, a splinter group, of the Oxford Group in Akron and in New York. They were called the drunk squad of, the oxford group. But upon publication of this book they began to formulate the fellowship and the structure Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Oxford Group as well as the Emanuel Movement, the Jacoby Club and the Washingtonians were other groups prior to Alcoholics Anonymous that had a lot of the qualities of Alcoholics Anonymous. They had a lot of the fellowship, a lot of the spiritual revitalization processes and were able to get drunks sober. There were many, many alcoholics who got sober in many, many different groups. The problem with a lot of those groups was a lack of recovery processes so most of them did not stay sober.

You could probably stay sober as long as you were really involved in these groups. But the minute you decided to go back to whatever else you were doing before you joined, you would get drunk. Bill Wilson and the early AA's realized that and put into practice a lifetime spiritual process so that that wouldn't happen. The Washingtonians were a great example. They went from six members in Baltimore, Maryland, to an estimated two to three hundred thousand in the course of three or four years, and then back down to zero because their particular fellowship exploded due to involvement in outside issues. So, as long as you were really involved in the Washingtonians, you were able to stay sober. But without a Washingtonian group, you were toast.

The, the thing about the twelve-step recovery process is it, it really lays out a way of living that's going to work. And it's not necessarily a meeting-dependent program. If you look in this book it certainly has some things to say about meetings. It certainly has some things to say about gathering together as alcoholics to stay sober. But this book does not point to a meeting-based sobriety process so popular today. It basically points to a spiritual God-centered recovery process. You hear things in meetings today like "so-and-so went back out and the first thing they admitted when they came back in was they stopped going to meetings". I suggest that there were a lot of other things going on before they ever stopped going to meetings.

You stop going to meetings before you stop going to meetings. You stop calling your sponsor, you stop working the steps, you stop helping other people and then all of a sudden there's not enough power to keep you in the meetings. The

alcoholic's ego wants to take credit for not only their success but their failure. "I shouldn't have stopped going to meetings" is what your ego wants to say. But that's not even close to the real problem and to the real answer. The meetings are not as necessary as the twelve-step process. If you've ever been to an international convention, there are groups of loners. Loners are people who are lighthouse keepers, who are merchant marines, or they're stationed on an island somewhere and there is no meeting, there is no fellowship. They stay sober by working the twelve-steps and sometimes writing letters to other alcoholics. And they meet every five years at the loners table at the international conventions. They don't need meetings to stay sober. What they're doing is they're about the business of the recovery process, of doing everything they possibly can for their, sobriety. Are meetings helpful? Absolutely. Are meetings essential for a lot of people? Probably, but the fact of the matter is this recovery process is not pointing you to doing ninety in ninety. What this is pointing you to, is inventory. It's pointing you to the steps. Pointing you to making direct amends. It's pointing you to prayer and meditation. And then it's pointing you to helping other people so you can become a good sponsor or someone who can be helpful wherever, wherever it's appropriate and available.

What happens if your meeting folds, or what happens if on rare occasions where a whole meeting goes back out?

Alcoholics Anonymous has been described as a self-help program. What it really is, it's a God-help program. It's more about establishing a connection with the divine however that's available to you, whatever path you choose to go on. This whole process is a recipe for that spiritual awakening. It gives you tools to hold onto that creates a spiritual awakening a day at a time. You know that's really what this is about. It's an unorthodox recovery process. Many people that read this book read it like it's The Da Vinci Code and go from page one all the way through. It's a much, much deeper process, because it's a text book and meant to be learned with all of the exercises done. The author has been through this book two hundred times, and some things are going to pop up that have never seen before, that are caught for the first time. Any truly classical spiritual text will meet you where you are. So the drying-out newcomer can read this book and try to apply some of the principles and will get a lot out of it, and the person with forty years sober who's been through the book six hundred times, will meet them where they are too. You know, the Bible is the same way, it will meet you where you are. Any classical spiritual text will do that.

*"He, he has also been greatly helped by the late Doctor William D. Silkworth, a New York specialist in alcoholism who has now and accounted no less than a medical saint by AA members and whose story of the early days of our society appears in the next pages."* The Doctor's Opinion is probably the most significant handful of pages in this book. William D.

Silkworth was the medical director of Townes Hospital in New York City. A man name Charlie Townes ran this hospital that specialized in drug and alcohol addiction. Now this was unusual because when you're looking at the 30's, it was not a lot of hospitals that specialized in drug and alcohol. They hated drug addiction and alcoholism back then. One of the reasons is the same reason they hate it today. The nurses and the doctors are not smiling when an alcoholic comes in for detox in the emergency room. And they never have been and they never will be. They usually sick to death, vomiting, shaking, hallucinating, and freaked out and they need medical attention. They are prescribed some Librium or some valium or something, calm down a little bit and start to realize that they might have overreacted going to the hospital. They start seeing what's wrong with how the hospital or the detox is being run. They start to get really aggravated and resentful and then storm out of the place without paying the bill. Then their back six days later. The hospitals just really don't like dealing with the chronic alcoholic or the chronic drug addict.

So to have a hospital in the 30's that specialized in it was unusual. There probably were only a handful in America at that time and because New York City was a large city they had one. But Charlie Townes and William Silkworth saw tens of thousands of alcoholics over the course of only a handful of years. Doing this they would learn some things, see some patterns, and understand some behavioral characteristics when that many alcoholics are paraded past you. And William Silkworth really was one of the first people to really get the alcoholic and it' providential that he would bump into Bill Wilson. Bill was there for treatment half a dozen times in the course of several years getting rid of the delirium tremens and they kind of struck up a friendship. Dr. Silkworth was very instrumental in being part of the medical establishment that supported Alcoholics Anonymous and the twelve-step movement in the early days. *"From this doctor, the broker had learned the grave nature of alcoholism."* The grave nature is how William Silkworth described as the obsession of the mind and the allergy of the body. This was the first time that Bill Wilson was able to really understand what he was suffering from.

*"Though he could not accept all the tenets of the Oxford Groups, he was convinced of the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others and the necessity of the belief in and dependence on God."* From William Silkworth, Bill Wilson understood the problem, from the Oxford Group he started to understand the solution.

And he started to believe that he needed a moral inventory. He needed to confess his personality defects. He had to make restitution to the people that he had harmed. He had to be helpful to others. And, the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God. He learned that from the Oxford Group because Ebby Thatcher was a worse drunk than him and here he was all dressed up in a brand new suit, big smile on his face, the lights are on in his eyes and he's saying, "Bill, I got religion and I'm sober." That's how Bill got twelve-stepped. That's how he was bought into the Oxford Group. That's how he got sober.

We have to understand that we wouldn't be around if it wasn't for the men of religion and the men of science.

*"Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic. But he had succeeded only in keeping himself sober. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in*

*order to save himself, he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician.*" What Bill was doing wrong was lambasting the alcoholics with the solution. He wasn't letting them find the truth of the first step that he learned through William Silkworth. Silkworth says, "You know Bill, you're evangelizing them. What you need to do is, you need to convince them that they have a problem. Then they're going to be more, more apt to listen to your solution."

If you're not convinced that you need God, the chances of you just volunteering and joining up is much slimmer than if you're convinced that you're going to die a horrible alcoholic death without a conversion experience. They called it a conversion experience. In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, they changed the verbiage to a spiritual awakening. We should not be concerned with the verbiage, we should value the experience. But if you're not convinced that you need that experience, then you're not going to work hard to get it. And William Silkworth understood that and he said, "Bill, tell them about the problem first, don't jump right to the solution. That really did help his effectiveness, because the next guy he tried was Doctor Bob, in Akron. Imagine a stock broker going to a physician and explaining to the physician that he has a medical problem and the physician listening to him.

. So for a stock broker to be giving medical advice to a surgeon, and having the surgeon actually listen is pretty incredible. That's just one of the incredible things that happened in early AA. This whole society was seconds and inches away from not existing. But enough of the right things happened that it blossomed and became what it is today, with conservatively, three to four million members in North America. "*The physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Doctor Silkworth's description of alcoholism and it's hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual rem-, uh, remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before, uh, been able to muster. He sobered up never to drink again, up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed to prove that one alcoholic can affect another as no non-alcoholic could. It also indicated that the strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.*" Lets look at that last sentence again. "*It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.*" That should be the topic at every twelve-step meeting in the country.

They are saying strenuous effort, not just shaking a guy's hand and getting him a cup of coffee and giving him your phone number and saying "give me a call, but strenuous effort to work with other alcoholics. That's what they did back then. That's one of the reasons why they had such great results and AA grew so fast. "*Hence the two men set to work almost frantically upon alcoholics arriving in the ward of the Akron, of the Akron City Hospital. Their very first case, a desperate one, recovered immediately and became AA number three. He never had another drink.*" This became AA number 3 - Bill Dodson.

Bill D was an attorney. Many of these were professional people in the early days that were out of work. He was an attorney and he had violent blackouts. What had happened is he had gone into the hospital because of the DT's and he had blackened the eyes of a nurse. This guy was literally tied to his bed in restraints when Bill and Bob showed up there. And he wasn't one hundred percent ready to work with them, but he was open-minded because he was desperate. He did not want to go through that again.

*"This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures but there was an occasional heartening success. When the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first AA group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time. A second small group promptly took shape at New York to be followed in 1937 with the start of a third in Cleveland."* Cleveland had actually the best AA recovery statistic of that time. They had a ninety-three percent recovery rate. Of people who came in, joined AA and meant business, ninety-three percent of them stayed sober for long periods of time. That, that's amazing when you look at the statistics today. "*Besides these, there were scattered alcoholics who had picked up the basic ideas in Akron and New York who were trying to form groups in other cities. By late '37, the number of members having substantial sobriety time behind them was sufficient to convince the membership that a new light had entered the dark world of the alcoholic.*" Absolutely. "*It was now time the struggling groups thought to place their message of their unique experience before the world. This determination bore fruit in the spring of 1935, 1939 by the publication of this volume. The membership had then reached about a hundred men and women.*" There were exaggerations in this book, this is one, there was anywhere between sixty and eighty people who were sober that were involved with Bill and Bob at this period of time. Most of them had less than a year but it was happening. They could see that it was happening. And a lot of times, Bill talked about things like they had happened, but they hadn't happened yet. But they were to happen. He really was far-seeing, he really was prophetic in a lot of areas. And he's making promises in this book that really hadn't happened yet but he knew they were going to. And they did. "*The fledgling society which had been nameless now began to be called Alcoholics Anonymous from the title of its own book. The blind, blind period ended and AA entered a new phase of its pioneering time. With the appearance of the new book, a great deal began to happen. Doctor Harry Emerson Fosdick, uh, the noted clergyman, reviewed it with approval. In the fall of 1939, Fulton Oursler, then editor of Liberty, printed a piece in his magazine, called 'Alcoholics and God.'"* These were all great articles, by the way. "*This brought a rush of, of eight hundred frantic inquiries into the little New York office which meanwhile had been established. Each inquiry was painstakingly answered, pamphlets and books were sent out. Businessmen traveling out of existing groups, were referred to these prospective newcomers. New groups were started up, and it was found, to the astonishment of everyone, that AA's message could be transmitted in the mail, as well as by word of mouth.*" This isn't as successful as by word of mouth. The main way that Alcoholics Anonymous has grown is from members who have established themselves in groups and move to areas where there are no meetings and they establish groups. But there have been times where publications were sent to certain areas, they used the big book, and

some of the service literature to start groups.

Today the internet has been very helpful in locating meetings and getting people in contact with each other. It can be an incredible support tool. I think people that want to utilize it as a sole recovery resource is kind of a dangerous trend. There are people that do online meetings today and whatever helps, helps and that's good. But the good can sometimes be the enemy of the best. Sometimes it's a good idea to be in an online meeting and it's a best idea to be at one.

*"By the end of 1939 it was estimated that eight hundred alcoholics were on their way to recovery. In the spring of 1940, John D. Rockefeller gave a dinner for many of his friends to which he invited many AA members to tell their stories. News of this got out on the world wires, inquiries poured in again, and many alcoholics went to the bookstores to get the book Alcoholics Anonymous."* Bill went to Rockefeller, looking for big money. The Rockefeller Foundation was in full swing in 1939. It was giving away a lot of money. And they thought that they'd get a lot of the John D. Rockefeller money and really push this AA thing forward. And what happened was the foundation members recognized that this is an avocation. This is one alcoholic working with another. This money would ruin this. So there were a lot of dejected alcoholics walking out of that meeting. They did get a small amount of money for Bill and Bob to keep going. This was a very smart move from the Rockefeller Foundation. Also, it's interesting that Alcoholics Anonymous is the only organization ever to pay back to the Rockefeller Foundation the money that was given to it.

AA people had recognized to be beholden to any outside enterprise would be harmful. They wanted to be self-supporting. A lot of donation checks go to Riverside Drive in New York City, to AA World Services. Some people that are grateful that their husbands lived an extra forty years because of AA will give an honorarium or something and they're all returned.

*"By March 1941, the membership had shot up to two thousand. Then Jack Alexander wrote a feature article in the Saturday Evening Post and placed such a compelling picture of AA before the general public that alcoholics in need of help really deluged us. By the close of 1941, AA numbered eight thousand."* That's a growth of several thousand percent in a year.

*"The mushrooming process was in full swing. AA had become a national institution. Our society then entered a fearsome and exciting adolescent period. The test that it was faced was this: Could these numbers of erstwhile erratic alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership, and money? Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms which would split AA apart? Soon AA was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disrupting experience the conviction grew that AA's had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our fellowship or pass off the scene."*

Now Bill Wilson was quietly designing the twelve traditions and some of the twelve concepts for world service during this period of time. He was hammering out the ideas in his head. And through a lot of figuring out what didn't work, he was able to put together what did work, what made successful groups, what were the attributes, what were the qualities of the successful groups. And he was able to put all those together. And, let's say you were a new group, uh, in Cincinnati, and you'd, you'd write a letter into AA saying, "You know, we're doing this and we're doing that, and this guy's doing this, and this guy's doing that..." What would happen is a letter would go back to your group saying, "We've found through our experience that this seems to work." And if groups were to listen to that experience, they had a much greater success rate than if they went off and did their own thing. There's always ego-maniacs, there's always people who are looking to be number one. Alcoholism is beset by people who want to be number one. And that happens a lot, AA groups became AA Group and Bingo, or AA Group and Bowling. And they'd do all these crazy things. And a lot of them had gambling meetings after the meetings. What happened was AA ended up being like a self-cleaning oven, the bad ones burned off. Through that experience they kept track, they were paying attention in New York. And they were disseminating their ideas of what the successful groups did.

*"As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively. It was thought that no alcoholic man or woman could be excluded from our society; that our leaders might serve but never govern; that each group was to be autonomous and there was to be no professional class of therapy. There were to be no fees or dues; our expenses were to be met by our own voluntary contributions. There was to be the least possible organization, even in our service centers. Our public relations were to be based upon attraction, rather than promotion."* "It was decided that all members ought to be anonymous at the level of press, radio, TV and films. And in no circumstances should we give endorsements, make alliances, or enter public controversies. This was the substance of AA's Twelve Traditions, which are stated in this book. Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first international conference held in Cleveland." That's another kind of stretch of the truth. They were not widely accepted by 1950. Bill Wilson had to drive all over the country and lobby like crazy for these traditions. Most groups did not want to be told what to do.

The author is not even convinced that Doctor Bob really wanted the traditions. But Bill Wilson, being very far-seeing, really felt the absolute necessity of these traditions and because of his reputation was able to talk a lot of the groups, and a lot of the group members and certain service committee members into voting for them. And they were passed unanimously, but that doesn't mean they had unanimous support throughout the meetings. They really did not.

*"Today the remarkable unity of AA is one of the greatest assets that our society has. While the internal difficulties of our adolescent period were being ironed out, public acceptance of AA grew by leaps and bounds. For this there were two principal reasons: the large number of recoveries and reunited homes. These made their impressions everywhere. Of alcoholics who came to AA and really tried, fifty percent got sober at once and remained that way; twenty-five percent*

sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with AA showed improvement.” That’s a seventy-five percent recovery rate. What does the normal home group have now? You can figure it out by coin or chip sales. How many ninety-day coins are sold and how many twenty-year coins are sold. There’s usually a huge difference. There are many reasons for that. However, we can’t say that the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is that successful at this point in time.

*“Other thousands came to a few AA meetings and at first decided they didn’t want the program. But great numbers of these, about two out of three, began to return as time passed. Another reason for the wide acceptance of AA was the ministrations of friends, friends in medicine, religion and the press, together with innumerable others who became our able and persistent advocates. Without such support, AA could have made only the slowest progress. Some of the recommendations of AA’s early medical and religious friends will be found further on in this book. Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization. Neither does AA take any particular medical point of view, though we cooperate widely with the men of medicine as well as with the men of religion. Alcohol being no respecter of persons, we are an accurate cross-section of America, and in distant lands, the same demographic evening-up process is now going on. By personal religious affiliation, we include Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus, and a sprinkling of Muslims and Buddhists. More than fifteen percent of us are women.”*

In the very early days, Bill and Bob were not too keen on having, or having women in the fellowship. If you listen to tapes of the first one hundred, there’s this story of Florence Rankin, who was AA woman number one, who literally had to punch the bouncer to get into the meeting. The bouncer wasn’t going to let her in. And she literally had to hit the guy as hard as she could. And the guy said, “Well, if you want in that bad, I’m not going to stop you.” She ended up relapsing, but AA women everywhere can thank her for that haymaker. Bill and Bob’s early position, which you won’t find in any of the conference-approved literature, was women were trouble in AA.

It was through the persistent trials and efforts of some of the first early women, especially Marty Mann, who convinced them that this was for everyone. It was a flying-blind period, they were all on a learning curve and, and today we can understand alcoholism to be non-respective of gender.

*“at present our membership is pyramiding at the rate of about twenty percent a year. So far, upon the total problem of several million actual and potential alcoholics in the world, we have made only a scratch.”* If you figure ten percent of the world population is alcoholic, and there’s nine billion people, that’s close to a billion alcoholics. You could easily say there’s, there’s two hundred and fifty million without, without being too far off, off the track, and there’s four million members in AA worldwide. You can’t be sure about the statistics but we’ve got a way to go. There’s a lot of twelve-step work to do for Alcoholics Anonymous members out there.

*“In all probability we shall never be able to touch more than a fair fraction of the alcohol problem in all its ramifications. Upon therapy for the alcoholic himself, we surely have no monopoly. Yet it is our great hope that all those who have as yet found no answer may begin to find one in the pages of this book and will presently join us on the high road to a new freedom”.*

#### Foreword to the Third Edition

*By March 1976, when this edition went to the printer, the total worldwide membership of Alcoholics Anonymous was conservatively estimated at more than one million, with almost 28 thousand groups meeting in over ninety countries.”* Figures now are roughly around three to five million members worldwide. And depending on which statistics you use that’s a growth since 1976 of four or five hundred percent.

*“Surveys of groups in the United States and Canada indicate that AA is reaching out not only to more and more people but to a wider and wider range. Women now make up more than one-fourth of the membership, among newer members; the proportion is nearly one-third. Seven percent of the AA’s surveyed are less than thirty years of age, among them, many in their teens.”* These statistics have definitely changed. Women are closing in on fifty percent and certainly, people less than thirty years of age are much greater than seven percent.

Whenever you’re studying something like this, you have to put it into historical context. When you look at the time, when you look at the late 30’s, you’re going to see that in a historical context many changes have taken place in the fellowship. Most of the meetings are non-smoking. The percentage of women members has grown.

You can relate a lot of big book studies to the way the Bible is studied. You can study something critically, historically, like a scientist would. Or you can study it devotionally, like practical application. How do you put these principles into your life to get the desired result? Hopefully we’re going to cover a little bit of both of those. Sometimes we’ll be critically historical, sometimes we’ll be devotional, which would mean basically we’ll be looking at the processes of recovery that these early members used, and trying to show how those same principles can be applied today.

Certain things meant different things back then. But the basic principles are still applicable today. The principles that worked so well in the late 1930s for recovery from alcoholism still work. They’re spiritual principles; they don’t change over time.

*“The basic principles of the AA program, it appears, hold good for individuals with many different lifestyles, just as the program has brought recovery to those of many different nationalities.”* When it says basic principles of the AA program, what they are talking about are the steps as the primary methodology of recovery, but they’re also talking about the principles. Inherent in this book are many principles that are applicable to one’s behavior, how you operate out there in

the world. But there's also the program, and anyone that's applied that over the years since 1939 have gotten the results of those applications.

They are saying that in this foreword. *"The Twelve Steps that summarize the program may be called "Los Doce Pasos" in one country, "Les Douze Etapes" in another, but they trace exactly the same path to recovery that was blazed by the earliest members of Alcoholics Anonymous. In spite of the great increase in the size and the span of this fellowship, at its core it remains simple and personal. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength and hope."* There's nothing in this that could be seen as changed from the beginning. The foreword to the fourth edition has some things in it where they've lost sight and are a little bit off the mark. If you go to the first printing of the fourth edition, you're going to see that there were some statements made in the foreword that created uproar amongst the Alcoholics Anonymous groups. And there was a lot of pressure to change some of these things. Unfortunately, I don't have a first printing, or I would show you, show you the differences.

*"This fourth edition of Alcoholics Anonymous came off the press in November 2001, at the start of a new millennium. Since the third edition was published in 1976, worldwide membership in AA has just about doubled, to an estimated two million or more, with nearly 100,800 groups meeting in approximately 150 countries around the world."* That's an additional sixty countries from 1976. There's been incredible in-roads into third-world countries in Asia, Europe and other areas. What happens is expatriates land in a country they've been involved the fellowship for a long period of time and for their own self-preservation, and for the good of all, they'll establish AA meetings. What will happen is they'll put together a service structure. There's the service manual, Twelve Concepts for World Service, there's the traditions, there's all the information about contacting AA World Services, and they'll start a service structure and AA in New York will find out about it. Then they start registering and making themselves known. They do keep track of all of this in New York and they try to be as helpful as they can.

*"Literature has played a major role in AA's growth, and a striking phenomenon of the past quarter-century has been the explosion of translations of our basic literature into many languages and dialects. In country after country where the AA seed was planted, it has taken root, slowly at first, then growing by leaps and bounds when literature has become available. Currently, "Alcoholics Anonymous" has been translated into forty-three languages."* AA has been asking for translator volunteers, so if anybody knows a bizarre language out there contact AA. Japan was translating the big book. What was happening was in Japan was AA meetings were popping up. It's still kind of in it's infancy in Japan. But they really started to do it right. Obviously the book "Alcoholics Anonymous" was first to be translated. The second book was ""AA Comes of Age." The conference-approved history of Alcoholics Anonymous. And they really believed that that should be the next book, so that these groups could understand how the fellowship grew and what they had learned so that the same mistakes weren't made in that country.

*"As the message of recovery has reached larger numbers of people, it has also touched the lives of a vastly greater variety of suffering alcoholics. When the phrase 'we are people who normally would not mix' (page seventeen of this book) was written in 1939, it still referred to a fellowship composed largely of men, and a few women, with quite similar social, ethnic and economic backgrounds."* They were mostly all failed, white collar city members.

*"Like so much of AA's basic text, those words have proved to be far more visionary than the founding members could ever have imagined. The stories added to this edition represent a membership whose characteristics, of age, gender, race and culture, have widened and deepened to encompass virtually everyone the first one hundred members could have hoped to reach. While our literature has preserved the integrity of the AA message..."* What it said in the first printing, this book preserves the AA message, what people used to recover. This forward caused a lot of consternation because what they were saying was, people in the old days used the recovery process from the big book. That's what it was implying. There were a lot of people who had a problem with that.

So they changed it to *"while our literature has preserved the integrity of the AA message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the fellowship."* One thing that New York GSO is famous for, is diversity, inclusion, really trying to stay out of business that it doesn't feel that it should get involved with, within the groups and today there's not as much emphasis on adherence to the big book processes as there used to be. They want it to be more open, they want it to be more inclusionary, and they really want groups to be able to feel their way into whatever works for those groups.

There are a lot of people showing up at Alcoholics Anonymous today who may not be as desperate as some of the first members, may not need the rigorous honesty and adherence to these principles that some of the earlier members did and they can be fine just attending meetings because their alcoholism hasn't progressed down the scale far enough. Groups can now become less effective in dealing with really aggressive and chronic state of alcoholism. They're going to be less effective in dealing with them if they aren't really up to speed on the recovery processes that are in this book.

This is borne out through the experience of a lot of people. You can take something and change it and change it, and lose something in the translation.

AA figured it a good idea to open the doors to everybody and everyone that is asking for help. That's probably a good idea. But there needs to be, there needs to be experienced members that are always in these groups that can recognize the people who are in real trouble and help them apply recovery processes.

Some people show up in the fellowships that are not desperately dependent on alcohol. There needs to be people who still understand that the recovery process is valid and will work for those low-bottom, chronic unbelievably dependent alcoholics that you still get. Let's say a group wants to know how they're doing. They need to ask themselves, how much relapse is going on in their group? Are there people that are coming in all the time raising their hands saying they're

coming back? If there are, it's not necessarily the person whose relapsing's fault.

It could be the fault of the group for not offering an adequate presentation and experience of recovery. They may just have a hands-off policy. I don't want to bother with him, he's drunk or something. There needs to be a core group of elders in every group with experience that can help those people. Because otherwise what'll happen is you've opened the doors so wide, so many people will come in, but you've forgotten about who this fellowship was developed for in the first place, the chronic, low-bottom alcoholic. And you're going to let them die because you may be much too interested in being all-inclusive, That's a trend see too often lately.

*"Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, AA members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world."* Now this is something that got a lot of member criticism too. But they did not change it. *"in any meeting, anywhere, AA's shared experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, AA's speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."* Modem-to-modem is great if that's all you have. If you're a loner or someone who is just not able geographically to get involved face to face with people in meetings, or to find alcoholics to help.

If you quit going to meetings and quit working with alcoholics and just go to on online meetings all day, that's not a reasonable answer. Alcoholism is an aggressive illness. If you don't take an aggressive stand with your recovery participation, you will lessen your chances for long-term recovery. This is one of the many things that you can do supplementally. Listening to recovery tapes as a supplemental activity in and around meetings, steps and services is a good thing. If you come to rely upon it solely, you're really not practicing the principles, or following the instructions and the instructions are very clear in the chapter "Working With Others" what kind of business you are supposed to be about. Do you have the right to work with whatever program you want to work? Absolutely. DO you have the flexibility to do just about anything you want? Absolutely. And, Bill Wilson talks about this a little bit in the "Twelve and Twelve." HE states, "if an AA member fails to perfect and enlarge their spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others they will get in trouble" He says in the 12X12 that, "if an AA member fails to adhere to the twelve step process, they will certainly sign their own death warrant." This isn't an opinion, it's facts based on experience. Their desolation and drunkenness are not going to be caused by people of power; it's going to be caused by their failure to adhere to spiritual principles. The taskmaster is alcohol. If you fail to participate enough to maintain sobriety, you get drunk. And your ego is going to want to take responsibility for it, "well, you know I got drunk because of this or because of that." Well, if you're a chronic alcoholic, if you're dependent on alcohol, if you're what this book describes a real alcoholic, you have very little to do with your relapse except that you have failed miserably at practicing spiritual principles.

It's a matter of power, choice or control. The book makes it very, very clear that their position on power, choice and control is, that you have lost it.

And, you only get it when its manifesting through God, if you practice certain principles.

Because you weren't practicing spiritual principles, you didn't have the power to stay sober. You weren't even there when you went to the bar to pick up the drink, because that usually is something that would be considered an insane decision. Let's say you're a chronic alcoholic, you drank twenty years, you ruined your life, you lost your license, you lost your jobs, your family left and you get yourself into recovery. You're participating in the fellowship and you're only doing a half measure attempt, when you go to the bar, you don't go there on a truth. You go there in an insane state, because putting alcohol back in your body can be nothing more than an insane decision. You know what it does to you. You know what the results are. You know you have very little power over it once you start drinking. You know it's basically the cause of really intense problems in your life. How could you actually walk across the street to the bar in a state of sanity and order more booze? That would be like if you finally recovered from polio after fifteen years of treatments you go back to the polio ward where you could get polio again. It's not something that makes any real logical sense. To look at this book you see the basic message is that the alcoholic at certain times has no mental defense against the first drink.

They've lost the power of choice and control in drink. And unless they have a spiritual experience, or a spiritual awakening, there's little hope of their recovery. People have challenged that position over the years. Many people in psychology and medicine have challenged it because it doesn't really fit a lot of the mental health criteria that you come across today. But, it sounds logical and is very observable. Bill was not a psychologist. They didn't understand mental health the way people understand it today; they were laymen. And they were just trying to describe it in the best way that they could. They described it as an insane thought that precedes the first drink, or a strange mental blind spot that precedes the first drink. And if you go down the scale far enough, there's little hope of recovery unless there's something that can treat that strange mental blind spot, and education won't do it. Therapy will not do it. Medication will not do it. It has to be something of a very profound nature. Describing alcoholism as we move forward we will see a very critical chronic type of alcoholism because that's what they were dealing with. So, to understand this book, you need to understand it in context. They were working with people that they were pulling out of sanitariums. People who had drank themselves basically insane. That was mainly the type of people they were working with, and that is good news and that is bad news. The bad news is that a lot of people don't relate to that today because they haven't experienced alcoholism at the level. The good news is that if it works for people that chronic and that critical, it will certainly work for someone who isn't that chronic and that critical.

When someone first gets exposed to recovery truth or at least something that resembles truth, what they're going to do is get upset with it.

It's devastating to your mental paradigm. Say you're an alcoholic and you're working kind of a half-hearted program,

you're not going to want to hear a lot of the things that you need to do. Because it really talks about a very structured, very intense recovery process that requires a lot of participation. One of the things that happened in the first four years was that if you came to them for help, Doctor Bob or Bill Wilson would ask you, "are you willing to get over it?" And if you said yes, they would put you in the hospital whether you needed to be detoxed or not. They wanted you to know that this is chronic, this is critical, this is medical, it's an emergency. You are dying. They put them in the hospital and then they marched a whole bunch of recovered or people who were in the AA program past them to tell their stories. We don't see the same thing nowadays. Most people who would walk into a group of Alcoholics Anonymous are not going to ask to be hospitalized. But that's what they did back then because it was very critical. Again, we need to look at this in the historical context. William D. Silkworth was the chief physician at Townes Hospital. Townes Hospital was in New York City and it was run by Charlie Townes. It was one of the only hospitals in America that specialized in drug and alcohol treatment. Most hospitals didn't even want to treat alcoholics or people who were addicted to drugs back then. They still don't. They do so only begrudgingly and some hospitals will put together detox units or addiction units. But, but it was not something people wanted to do. So the fact that a hospital was built specifically in New York City, near Bill Wilson was a very, very good thing. Bill went there a number of times. Some of the detoxing procedures were pretty scary. There is a great book that's been written called "Chasing the Dragon". For anybody who's interested in the history of alcoholism and drug treatment, that's the reference point. That's the encyclopedia that you need to go to. But some of the treatment processes prior to the spiritual processes were horrific.

Charlie Townes treated tens of thousands of alcoholics in his stay there as chief physician. He got to see a lot. Patterns start to emerge. Now the science of addiction was not very far along when he was practicing. And some of the things that they did, we would look on and laugh today, but that's the best they had back then. But what was good was that he had so many of these people run through that he started to be able to establish types. He would know if you were a hopeless alcoholic, you're going to die. He knew that that would happen. And he would know if you had any hope. And he would know if this might process work for you or if that might work for you. But he started establishing information and kind of a mental database about alcoholism treatment. He was not an alcoholic himself. He started to see how they operated and he learned a lot. And he was basically giving Bill Wilson in a nutshell what the problem of alcoholism and addiction is.

Another thing he did not sign his letter. In this letter, he basically says, "These people that I've met that have a spiritual solution have something that's working. Pay attention to it and I encourage it." But he would not sign that letter. That would basically be like a modern doctor, a modern psychiatrist saying, "Well, you know, I'm working with all these people, but there's a guy down the street with Ouija board that seems to be healing all of them, so I encourage that because I don't want anybody to suffer. I encourage it and please pay attention to that Ouija board guy." But he's not going to sign it because it's going to make him the laughingstock of his profession. That's what Silkworth's position was. He hesitated to put his credibility to the letter with his signature until later on when Alcoholics Anonymous was established to a point where he saw it as legitimate and absolutely valid and he was not afraid for his career to associate himself with it.

### The Doctor's Opinion 1

*We of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the reader will be interested in the medical estimate of the plan of recovery described in this book.* You need to take this in context. This was one medical director's opinion on alcoholism in 1939. They have DSM mental health criteria now and everything is completely different today. *"convincing testimony must surely come from medical men who have had experience with the sufferings of our members and have witnessed our return to health. A well-known doctor, chief physician at a nationally prominent hospital specializing in alcoholic and drug addition, gave Alcoholics Anonymous this letter..."* *"To whom it may concern, I have specialized in the treatment of alcoholism for many years. In 1934 I attended a patient who, though he had been a competent businessman of good earning capacity, was an alcoholic of the type that I had come to regard as hopeless."* He knew hopeless alcoholics died. You could treat them, you could make them better, you could put a Band-Aid on their wound but they would come back again and again but one day they wouldn't come in any more. They'd be dead.

*"In the course of his third treatment, he acquired certain ideas concerning a possible means of recovery."* Those ideas came from the Oxford Group. *"As part of his rehabilitation, he commenced to present his conceptions to other alcoholics, impressing upon them that they must do likewise with still others."* That's one alcoholic working with another trying to get them through the steps.

*"This has become the basis of a rapidly growing fellowship of these men and their families. This man and over one hundred others have appeared to have recovered. I personally know scores of cases who were of the type with whom other methods had failed completely. These facts appear to be of extreme medical importance, because of the extraordinary possibilities of rapid growth inherent in this group they may mark a new epoch in the annals of alcoholism. These men may well have a remedy for thousands of such situations. You may rely absolutely on anything they say about themselves."* That was the first letter. Historically you can find the original forms of the letter the way William D. Silkworth wrote them. Bill took editorial license and rearranged the material, he didn't put in any content that Silkworth didn't already have but he arranged the letters for this book. So, anybody who has deeper interest in this can find those letters on Silkworth.net. There's a lot of big book history sites where you can find them.

*"The physician, who at our request gave us this letter, has been kind enough enlarge upon his views in another statement*

which follows. In this statement, he confirms what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe – that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It did not satisfy us to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives. These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were sickened as well. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.” What they’ve learned since the printing of this book is how alcohol is processed in the pancreas and the liver and the cardiovascular system of a chronic alcoholic. The chronic alcoholic is not processing it the way a normal temporary drinker would.

What, what happens is, those particular organs deteriorate or change and they aren’t metabolizing in the same way. There are many studies that will show the process of what happens in an alcoholic when they consume alcohol. The basic thing that we need to know is that once those organs have developed to the point where they aren’t processing like a normal drinker, it creates what’s known as a phenomenon of craving, an almost irresistible urge to put more alcohol in your body. He’s saying it never happens in the normal temperate drinker, facts bear that out.

With most chronic alcoholics, once they start drinking, they have to be separated by not being able to get any more, by passing out or by police. Those are the three ways they’ll separate while they’re on a run.

“The doctor’s theory that we have an allergy to alcohol interests us. As laymen, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that his explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account. Though we work out our solution on the spiritual as well as an altruistic plane, we favor hospitalization for the alcoholic who is very jittery or befogged. More often than not, it is imperative that a man’s brain be cleared before he is approached, as he has then a better chance of understanding and accepting what we have to offer.” If you are the type of person who’s out there doing twelve step calls, out there helping alcoholics, answering the phone on the phone lines, you do have to understand that there’s a responsibility to at least let people know that detoxing from alcohol at a certain stage in alcoholic addiction is dangerous. You can stroke out that happens a lot. You can go into convulsions. Your aorta can rupture. So it still is a good idea, we still favor hospitalization for the people who are going through delirium tremens, or in severe alcoholic withdrawal. You want them to be safe medically. And it’s pretty easy for the hospital to make them safe usually. They’ll give them Librium or some other sedative and, and that’ll at least calm their bodies down during the detox process so that their blood pressure will stabilize and get them safe.

If you’re going on a twelve-step call, sometimes it’s a good idea to have alcohol. When somebody calls for help, many times they need to get to detox. It may take some time to get this accomplished. They want to stop drinking, their life is getting unbelievably ugly and what can be a good idea is to have some airline bottles. A half a dozen whiskeys, half a dozen vodkas, keep them in your car, and if, if on the way from the person’s house, talking them into the car, to the hospital. If you have some experience you can make the decision on whether or not you think the person needs some alcohol. At some detoxes you can’t bring in somebody who is not drunk, so many people who get people drunk to take them to treatment because otherwise they’re not going to get admitted. The importance of what Silkworth armed Bill Wilson with is the facts about himself. He armed him with the knowledge that he has an abnormal body that’s not going to tolerate alcohol without creating what he called an allergy, which we now call today the phenomenon of craving. One drink is really asking for the second drink. The second drink is demanding the third drink, the third drink is absolutely insisting on the fourth drink, and the more alcohol in an alcoholic’s body, the more craving there is.

Dr. Silkworth explained that to Bill, then he explained that there is a mental capacity to this too. Silkworth knew that these people really did want to get over drinking but there was a disconnect. There was something that kept them from being able to access sound judgment at certain times in their life. And people that would that would swear off and think they are cured and say “thank you so much”, are back in a week almost dying from drinking again,. He armed Bill with the medical estimate from 1939 that really helped Bill work with people because it helped him to explain the powerlessness of alcoholism. It helped him to explain just how much trouble these people actually were in, that this is more serious than they think. When you’re able to pass that information on to somebody and help them convince themselves, that they’re in real trouble, then there’s a little bit more participation in the work that’s got to come next, the participation in the recovery process. How many people over the years where it would be the absolute best decision in their life to give up drinking, yet they don’t. And to say they’re just choosing not to get sober, misses the whole point.

It’s a much deeper and bigger problem. There’s a lot of stigma, there’s a lot of misunderstanding about alcoholics, there are major political figures today that have made statements saying they’re doing it to themselves, why should we give them money. There’s a wholesale misunderstanding because it’s such an unorthodox illness. Silkworth recognized it. What Silkworth didn’t know what that there was a spiritual recovery process. Bill Wilson learned that from the Oxford Group. So having the problem and having the solution is where Alcoholics Anonymous started.

Many medical facts have come to light since this time. Over half of the people that get sober or get clean and have long-term sobriety recovery, will die from complications relating to nicotine misuse. There are a high proportion of smokers among alcoholics and drug addicts, even in recovery. There’s an addiction piece that’s much stronger with alcoholics and drug addicts than there are within the whole population. The people that are still smoking in many instances have higher characteristics of addiction. So if it’s going to kill half of us who are in recovery, we should be paying attention to it.

The application of the twelve steps goes across the board. There are over two hundred groups that use the twelve steps and the only thing they change is step one, what are you powerless over and step twelve, who do you need to work with. There’s many people who go into those fellowships at a bottom, at a low point in their life with a sense of desperation, the same way that people show up at Alcoholics Anonymous and with good guidance and sponsorship, they can be shown

how big their problem is, and if they have the willingness to apply the principles in their lives, they can become abstinent. These principles are spiritual in their nature, and if when practiced as a way of life can expel the obsession for almost any obsessive-compulsive disorder.

## The Doctor's Opinion 2

William D. Silkworth, chief physician at Townes Hospital, was asked by Bill Wilson to give a medical estimate. Of alcoholism and what he observed of the recovery process coming out of the Calvary Church Oxford Group. He worked closely with Bill, because when Bill sobered up, he went back to find prospects. He understood intuitively that he needed to pass this on to try to help other alcoholics stay sober. He would go back through Dr. Silkworth and get prospects, people to talk to about his transformational recovery experience. After Dr. Silkworth witnessed a number of what he would describe as wholesale miracles, people that Bill was working with that were of the hopeless variety actually get sober and move on with their lives, Dr. Silkworth was willing to write this letter and witness to what was going on, what Bill was involved with and what was happening with these hopeless alcoholics actually getting sober and getting their lives back together. This is the second part of the letter, it actually was edited by Bill Wilson for presentation in this book. You can go to, I think, I think the website is [silkworth.net](http://silkworth.net) if you want to find out more about Dr. Silkworth.

"The subject presented in this book seems to me to be of paramount importance to those afflicted with alcoholic addiction." Dr. Silkworth was at the top of his field. There was not a lot of professional treatment going on for alcoholism and drug addiction but in some of the large metropolitan areas, there would be enough of a market for it that you could set one up as a business. Remember, normal hospitals were loath to treat alcoholics and drug addicts. They just didn't see that it was anything but a waste of their time.

When you are bringing people to get detoxed even at the places that are specifically for detox they will usually be trying to find a way to not admit you. They're looking for a loophole to send you back out in the car and, and to get rid of you. Even at the places that really are specifically designed for detoxing. The alcoholic and the addict are not pretty at the chronic stages where they need treatment. They're, they're argumentative, they're delusional, they're not trustworthy. They can be dangerous. They're certainly not the type of people that you want to be hanging out with if you're an admissions professional at one of these places. They're seeing the illness in its worst aspect. So, the fact that Silkworth was, was heading up a clinical team of a hospital back in the 30's, that puts him at the top of the pyramid as far as understanding, at least at the 1930's level. He could understand alcoholism, and drug addiction. So a medical estimate coming from this individual should really be seen as a testimony to what the book Alcoholics Anonymous was about and what Bill Wilson and the first one hundred or so were about.

So it's extraordinary that he got a professional doctor that treats alcoholism to basically say "this guy with his Oxford Group process is having much better luck than we scientists are" ...it's amazing that he was able to pull that out of the guy. But Silkworth being a very moral man, being honest and compassionate and if he saw something that was working, the heck with his professional perspective, let's, let's highlight this, let's let people know about this because he was just seeing too many people die. And most of them were what he would describe as a hopeless alcoholic, so it's almost like, a doctor today treating stage four cancers. After a while you just know that there's only a fraction of a hope for most of the people.

"There was, therefore, a sense of real satisfaction when I was asked to contribute a few words on the subject which is covered in such masterly detail in these pages." Let's read this paragraph the way he wrote it and then change it around and read it with a spiritual perspective.

"We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of moral psychology was of urgent importance to alcoholics, but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception. What with our modern standards, our scientific approach to everything, we are perhaps not well equipped to apply the powers of good that lie outside our synthetic knowledge." Now let's read this from a spiritual perspective.

We doctors have realized for a long time that some form of spiritual awakening was of urgent importance to alcoholics but its application presented difficulties beyond our conception. What with our ultra-modern standards, our scientific approach to everything, we are perhaps not equipped to apply the powers of God that lie outside our synthetic knowledge. When someone reads it that way, it's easy to understand. The hospital is not the place where you're going to be in the most conducive atmosphere for spiritual awakening and a consciousness of God.

So he was saying was the thing that seems to work most, the spiritual awakening, the consciousness of God, is outside our synthetic knowledge. We're not well equipped to apply those powers. We're a medical institution. Now, certainly we would never say that treatment for alcoholics is a bad thing.

How I see treatment today is there's a continuum and you go from active alcoholism to permanent, long-term satisfying recovery. There's a continuum that starts at one end and goes to the other. Treatment is place, a valid place on that continuum, usually in the very beginning of one's process through that continuum, so many of us needed to be exposed to treatment. They believed back in the beginning it was a good idea to expose people to professional treatment, even if they didn't need it, just so that they understood, this is a medical problem. It's, a spiritual, physical, mental problem and sometimes it requires professional treatment to stabilize you so you can jump onto the continuum that will lead you to permanent satisfied recovery with quality in your life.

The best people in the field get it, they understand that the spiritual solution is ultimately what is going to change

someone's life. They just also understand that without some stabilization, they're not going to be able to fit into that continuum – they will not participate in the actions needed for recovery.

"Many years ago, one of the leading contributors to this book came under our care in this hospital and while here, he acquired some ideas which he put into practical application." This of course was Bill Wilson. "Later he requested the privilege of being allowed to tell his story to other patients here and with some misgiving, we consented." Most treatment centers today go after people in Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous and they want those twelve step meetings in their facility. They realize how valid they are and how important they are. Bill was coming to them basically saying "I've found religion" and this is going to cause skepticism with the medical professionals. They're not going to really feel comfortable with that. But the fact was that there was so many transformational recoveries that happened with the people Bill was working with, that he had some misgivings but consented.

"The cases we have followed through have been most interesting. In fact, many of them are amazing. The unselfishness of these men as we have come to know them, the entire absence of a profit motive, and their community spirit, is indeed inspiring to one who has labored long and wearily in the alcoholic field. They believe in themselves, and still more in the power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death." This power, remember, is something that is outside of his synthetic knowledge and, with his ultra-modern standards and scientific approach, he was not well equipped to apply. So again the amazing thing is, he supported this. A lot of doctors are unwilling to operate outside of their synthetic knowledge. It's one of those seconds and inches moments in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous where the right person was there at the right time.

"Of course an alcoholic ought to be freed from his physical craving for liquor, and this often requires a definite hospital procedure, before psychological measures can be of maximum benefit." The physical craving for liquor, this is described in a few more paragraphs, but basically what it is, is, when there's alcohol in an alcoholic's system is an almost overwhelming physiological desire to have more alcohol. Why do alcoholics get so drunk they can't even operate their own pants zipper? It happens because of the phenomenon of craving. One drink always asks for the second. The second demands the third; the third insists on the fourth and by the time the alcoholic has his twelfth drink, he wants that more than he wanted his eleventh drink. Because the more alcohol in an alcoholic's body, the stronger the physical craving. So to pull somebody away from that, sometimes you need to medicate them. And we still do. I think it's a bad idea for anybody that tries to just tell somebody to quit, like somebody who's a real chronic alcoholic to just stop. So many times the alcoholics die from convulsions or cardio-pulmonary problems, or strokes. So if there's no other detox or rehab option, take somebody to the E.R. If you can't find a detox, or you can't find a rehab, take them to the E.R. and at the least they'll monitor their blood pressure and make sure they're medicated so that, so that they're not going to stroke out.

Words have changed over the years and there's a lot of people that use a lot of words not understanding that they had different meanings back in the day. The craving for liquor described in this letter only happened with alcohol in your body. If you're obsessing about a drink, that's a whole different thing, that's really the obsession of the mind. I believe if the obsession of the mind hits you, and there's alcohol available somewhere that you can get your hands on, you're already committed. You're already drinking.

You'll hear a lot of people saying, "For the first three years I had an obsession to drink", they're using the wrong word because in this book, an obsession of the mind cannot be fought by willpower. If the obsession hits you, you cannot talk yourself out of it, or use a trick or a tool to stop from going to the liquor store. You're on your way. The chapter after Bill's Story called More About Alcoholism, goes into that and we're going to be looking at length at that specific issue. It's probably the most misunderstood piece related to alcoholism because if you haven't experienced an obsession of the mind, then it's very difficult to understand it. You can say you are giving up alcohol a hundred times every morning and be drunk in the afternoon. And if you were to hook an alcoholic up to a lie detector, the polygraph expert would have said, "this guy's never going to drink again, he really means it." But what happens is the obsession will overcome you and then you are on my your to a liquor store, there was nothing you can really do about it. And that's what people misunderstand. They really think it's a lack of willpower. They think that people are weak, that they're just morally depraved. But that's not the case at all. They don't have power, choice and control over going to the liquor store. It's not available to them. And many people even in recovery don't understand this. Because maybe they've come in before they've quite become alcoholic. There's a lot of information in these chapters that talk about the potential alcoholic or the heavy drinker. There's a lot of people that show up in twelve-step recovery programs who are not yet really alcoholic. They, they still have power choice and control and wonder why the hell Harry over there relapses every day. They don't understand what this book is saying. This book is painting a very bleak picture as far as the alcoholic is concerned. But after that bleak picture, they paint a very optimistic solution, that's what, that's what's really great about this book. "We believe and so suggested a few years ago that the action of alcohol to these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. " A lot of people will misunderstand the allergy, they'll think, "Well I don't break out in hives when I drink." An allergy is just an abnormal reaction to a food or a beverage. The unnatural, abnormal reaction that the alcoholic has is the phenomenon of craving. What happens is, they don't break out in a rash, they break out in a craving. And it's a strong physiological craving to put more alcohol in their body. This only happens with the allergic type Silkworth is saying. The allergic type is the alcoholic. Aunt Fanny and Uncle Fred can have two glasses of wine, and then relax. They don't have to close the bar. They are not allergic to alcohol. The people who are allergic or alcoholic, start drinking...the motors gets turning and they close the bar, and they usually end up finishing their drunk by passing out

somewhere.

“These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all, and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.” Now this is saying a number of things...they cannot safely use alcohol in any form at all, once the alcoholic craving is manifested in an alcoholic, they can stay away from booze for twenty years and if they pick it up, it'll, be right back, right back where they left it.

Picture smoking, there's number of people that would understand this when it's related to smoking. Let's say you haven't smoked for ten years and you just decide “Oh, the heck with it, I'm going to have a cigarette”...and a week later, you're back to a pack a day. What you've done is you've activated the nicotine receptors, they remember how to operate from when you were last smoking. The same type of reaction happens with alcohol.

“Once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their self-confidence...” What he says there is, self-confidence is being able to control your drinking, saying, “Okay, I'm going to have three tonight and that's it.” So if you say you're going to have three and end up having twenty, you've lost your self-confidence. You can't be confident that you can control your drinking.

The reliance upon things human, that's basically human power. The problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve... that talks a little bit about our lives have become unmanageable. What happens with alcoholism is, is there's always problems, that pile up on you when you become alcoholic and when you're headed down the scale. Your personal relationships are screwed up, your ability to show up where you need to, the way you need to show up, is affected, a lot of things happen to your ability to cope and deal, and he notices this too from the people that he treats.

“Frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices.” Did anyone ever beg you to stop? “Will you please stop drinking?” This has no power, none whatsoever. I understand I'm drunk, breaking your heart but it's not going to stop, I'm not going to stop drinking, we would if we could – we are not stupid people, we value things in our lives that we lose. Your life is so wonderful, wouldn't you, why are you doing this to her? Why don't you quit for her?

And, questions like that, it's not like the alcoholic does not understand them, it's that they go through them, there's no way to internalize that, it goes conflict with the obsession for alcohol.

“The message that can interest and hold the alcoholic people must have depth and weight.” One of the things that he found that Bill Wilson had, was a message of depth and weight. He basically came in and said, “I know how you feel, I have gone through everything you're going through, and I've found a way out. Would you like to hear about the way out?” That's a message of depth and weight. Someone just screaming at you to stop drinking has little effect. “In nearly all cases, their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves, if they are to re-create their lives.” They learned this early on. If they could have straightened out our lives on their own wouldn't they have done it by now? We're doing stupid things but we're not stupid. We're not bad people but we're doing bad things. There's got to be something wrong. There's lack of power, choice, control going on somewhere.

One of the things that Carl Jung transmitted to Bill Wilson during the Carl Jung/Bill Wilson letters was, he said to Ebby Thatcher that he had never seen a hopeless alcoholic recover except in rare instances where they had a religious conversion experience.

It had to be so fundamentally an at depth transformation, that the person's attitude and outlook had to be shifted. The way they'd behave, the way they'd think had to be on a new level, a whole different platform. Carl Young had heard about a few alcoholics recover that that had happened to. And he said to Roland Hazard, who was one of the early Oxford Group members, that this is what you need to look for if you want to survive alcoholism.

“If any feel that, as psychiatrists directing a hospital for alcoholics, we appear somewhat sentimental, let them stand with us awhile on the firing line, see the tragedies, the despairing wives, the little children; let the solving of these problems become a part of their daily work and even of their sleeping moments and the most cynical will not wonder that we have accepted and encouraged this movement.” He's apologizing for talking about a spiritual solution when he's a doctor. He's a psychiatrist.

He's saying the reason I'm doing this is because it's taking up part of my sleeping moments, I'm seeing families blown apart. Yes, I'm willing to encourage anything that will help. So this really speaks to the morality of our Dr. Silkworth. “We feel after many years of experience that we have found nothing which has contributed more to the rehabilitation of these men than the altruistic movement now growing up with them.” Remember he spent years working with these alcoholics and he's saying he's found nothing that's contributed more than Bill Wilson and his loosely-banded group of Oxford Group drunks. “Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol.” Alcoholics especially like the effect. I don't know about you, but I wasn't a big fan of the taste of Canadian whiskey, you know what I mean? You drink a big glass of Canadian whiskey and that, that's a chore. I mean, you have to make a commitment to down that glass. So, I was looking for the effect. Some people will say, “I love the taste of beer” or “I just live the taste of scotch”, and that may or may not be true but, they may also love the taste of spring water but would never drink a case of it in one sitting. MM: Yeah.

“The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” We may admit to ourselves that drinking is really bad especially when we're really sick in the morning. But we can't distinguish the truth from the false, we can't see the real truth, we can't see how much trouble we're in, we don't understand the obsession of mind, we don't understand the allergy of the body. We don't understand that it's a spiritual solution; we don't see the truth from the false. If you go up to somebody who's just gotten his third DWI, and say “why didn't you stop drinking after your second DWI?”, they're not going to understand the question. It's not a question they're

going to be able to internalize because they can't differentiate the truth from the false.

"To them their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. They're restless, irritable and discontented, unless they can again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks, drinks which they see others taking with impunity." So, what happens with the alcoholic is, emotionally, spiritually, mentally they become increasingly uncomfortable when they're sober. They become increasingly anxious. They become increasingly depressed. Their problems pile up on them emotionally and they see alcohol as a solution or a treatment or a medication for that emotional, spiritual or mental condition. Being restless, irritable and discontented, when the alcoholic gets that way, that opens the door for the obsession of the mind and they start to think, "You know what takes care of that, restless, irritable and discontent? If I have two or three beers, I'm going to be good." And they don't see the truth from the false. They don't see those two or three beers is going to lead to fifty.

And you know what, everybody else is drinking. You know, all my other friends, everybody that I know drinks. Why can't I drink? They're asking themselves the wrong questions, start drinking again and the phenomenon of craving develops. They pass through the well-known stages of the spree, emerging remorseful with a firm resolution not to drink again.

They can get up in the morning so sick that they swear that they are never going to do it again. By that afternoon they are on the way to the liquor store.

The authors experience was alcohol was poisoning him. He was drinking enough of it to be alcohol-poisoned every single night, yet couldn't get off of the treadmill. just couldn't do it, just couldn't summon up the wherewithal to just stop.

Nancy Reagan had the big slogan, "Just Say No." Just say no? I mean if I could have just said no, I would have just said no a long time ago. Saying no doesn't even come into the landscape. It's like trying to stop a semi with a cobweb. "This is repeated over and over and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change, there is very little hope of his recovery." Now this is a doctor saying a religious conversion experience, that's what they were calling it back then.

And unless someone can have an entire psychic change, conversion experience, there's little hope that they will recover. That's what he's saying as chief physician at the best known hospital for drug and alcoholism treatment in New York City. "On the other hand, as strange as it may seem to those who do not understand, once a psychic change has occurred, the spiritual awakening, the very same person who seemed doomed, who had so many problems he despaired of ever solving them, suddenly finds himself easily able to control his desire for alcohol, the only effort necessary being that required to follow a few simple rules." The rules being the recovery process...the rules are the things that they've learned coming from the Oxford Group that they needed to continue to do in their lives that created the atmosphere where the power of God could come in and offer that power to say safe and protected from alcohol. Even today it's very hard to talk along these lines because it's difficult to put an experience like this into language. It's really something that needs to be experienced. How do you describe to a blind man the colors of the spectrum? It's the same kind of thing. How do you describe to someone who's never had a spiritual experience what a spiritual experience is. It's very difficult and it's very troubling when you're talking in rehabs or detoxes and you know you're just not getting through to them. They just don't understand what you're talking about.

"Men have cried out to me in sincere and despairing appeal, "Doctor, I cannot go on like this. I have everything to live for. I must stop but I cannot. You must help me." Faced with this problem, if a doctor is honest with himself, he must sometimes feel his own inadequacy. Although he gives all that is in him, it is often not enough. One feels that something more than human power is needed to produce the essential psychic change. Though the aggregate of recoveries resulting from psychiatric effort is considerable, we physicians must admit we have made little impression upon the problem as a whole. Many types do not respond to the ordinary psychological approach." That is absolutely true. It's still true today. Many doctors will try to treat the symptoms of alcoholism, the depression, the anxiety; they will try to treat the symptoms with medication. But the symptoms always follow the illness, and if you really want to solve the problem, you need to treat the illness, not necessarily all of the symptoms.

Now symptom treatment is important but doctors can't treat the illness. They can only treat the symptoms. So, back in the day, Alcoholics Anonymous went around to a lot of doctors and had some of them buy-in. They didn't try treatment they just sent them to AA. Nowadays you're going to get a lot of doctors that are going to try all kinds of pharmaceuticals on you, and you many go down dead ends. You may be treated appropriately. The medication may be valid and appropriate. However, you might have temporary symptoms because of the alcoholism and get caught up in a long and protracted medication trail that really is not very helpful for your permanent recovery.

In the worst cases doctors will do something like, "Oh, you're an alcoholic, here, have some valium. You look nervous". That is so inappropriate. And if you follow the guidelines in the manuals, the endless criteria from some of the physician manuals, it may look appropriate to prescribe benzos to someone who has anxiety. However, if they're alcoholic, that's going to throw them back into one more relapse with alcohol. And that can be deadly. Not all doctors have treatment in addictions training, they just don't. Some of them really do. Some of them really don't. It's a large problem, and it's a problem where you don't see a lot of people trying to address. Not all the doctors out there really care. I think they're willing to follow best practices as far as they're concerned with the manuals and the criteria for appropriate medication prescription, but how many of them need to or want to study addictions enough to know that this may be the inappropriate drug to be giving someone who has alcoholic tendencies. Again, alcoholism is a misunderstood illness. It's misunderstood by doctors, it's misunderstood by psychiatrists. It's misunderstood by alcoholics. It's misunderstood by twelve-step members. It's misunderstood by treatment professionals that treat you for it. It's a very, very complicated and unorthodox illness.

When they put this book together, they really got the problem and solution. "I do not hold with those who believe that

alcoholism is entirely a problem of mental control. I have had many men who had, for example, worked a period of months on some problem or business deal which was to be settled on a certain date, favorably to them. They took a drink a day or so prior to that date, and then the phenomenon of craving at once became paramount to all other interests so that the important appointment was not met. These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control. There are many situations which arise out of the phenomenon of craving which cause men to make the supreme sacrifice rather than continue to fight." There are two schools of thought on this; some believe "supreme sacrifice" is suicide. Some people that supreme sacrifice is simply to give up and keep drinking. Either one of those might be true in different situations.

"The classification of alcoholics seems most difficult and in much detail is outside the scope of this book. There are, of course, the psychopaths who are emotionally unstable. We are all familiar with this type. They are always 'going on the wagon for keeps.' They are over-remorseful and make many resolutions, but never a decision." "There is a type of man who is unwilling to admit that he cannot take a drink. He plans various ways of drinking. He changes his brand or his environment. There is the type who always believes that after being entirely free from alcohol for a period of time he can take a drink without danger. There is the manic-depressive type, who is, perhaps, the least understood by his friends, and about whom a whole chapter could be written." This has really been expanded by professionals who have studied alcoholism over the years and if you want to learn about these things, probably the best place to go is some of the textbooks today. The science of addictions has progressed, not the recovery process or the problem however.

"Then there are types entirely normal in every respect except in the effect alcohol has upon them. They are often able, intelligent friendly people." To be an alcoholic, you need to develop the phenomenon of craving when you drink. Every once in a while someone will come along who is a heavy drinker who'd just load up every once in a while and get in trouble. They admit to being an alcoholic and when you ask them, "well, can you drink two?"...."Oh yeah, I can drink two. If I decide to drink five, I can drink five. I can have three, you know, I decided to go out and get drunk." Those types of people are heavy drinkers, they're not alcoholics. Alcoholics have to develop the phenomenon of craving or fail to meet the description of the alcoholic in the book.

"This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity." So if you get the phenomenon of craving, you're set apart as a distinct entity. "It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence." So, to fight off the phenomenon of craving, you have to be abstinent. But being abstinent poses its own problem, because you become obsessed with the idea of drinking. So, that really is the main problem of the alcoholic. And it says "by any treatment with which we are familiar". Every once in a while, you're going to see there's a new pill sold on the market that will allow an alcoholic to drink normally. The fine print usually says "not for real alcoholics." For an alcoholic the first thought is, okay, there's a pill that will allow me to drink two drinks normally...that's wonderful. If I have twelve pills, that will allow me to have 24 drinks normally. The alcoholic cannot safely drink alcohol at all, never will be able to.

"This immediately precipitates us into a seething cauldron of debate. Much has been written pro and con, but among physicians, the general opinion seems to be that most chronic alcoholics are doomed." Even today, alcoholism is described by the American Medical Association as "a chronically relapsing condition." Now; that's after Alcoholics Anonymous and all the recovery that's taken place in the last seventy years. It does not have to be a chronically relapsing disease, a terminal relapsing disease, recovery is possible.

"What is the solution? Perhaps I can best answer this by relating one of my experiences. About one year prior to this experience a man was brought in to be treated for chronic alcoholism. He had but partially recovered from a gastric hemorrhage and seemed to be a case of pathological mental deterioration. He had lost everything worthwhile in life and was only living, one might say, to drink. He frankly admitted and believed that for him there was no hope. Following the elimination of alcohol, there was found to be no permanent brain injury – no wet brain. He accepted the plan outlined in this book. One year later, he called to see me and I experienced a very strange sensation. I knew the man by name, and partly recognized his features but there all the resemblance ended. From a trembling, despairing nervous wreck, had emerged a man brimming over with self-reliance and contentment. I talked with him for some time, but was not able to bring myself to feel that I had known him before. To me he was a stranger and so he left me. A long time passed with no return to alcohol." It talks in this book about being reborn by the twelve-step process. This is an example, someone who was practically a new human being after going through the recovery process and in recovery for a year

"When I need a mental uplift, I often think of another case brought in by a physician prominent in New York. The patient had made his own diagnosis, and deciding his situation hopeless, had hidden in a deserted barn determined to die. He was rescued by a searching party, and, in a desperate condition, brought to me. Following his physical rehabilitation, he had a talk with me in which he frankly stated he thought the treatment a waste of effort, unless I could assure him, which no one ever had, that in the future he would have the willpower to resist the impulse to drink. His alcoholic problem was so complex, and his depression so great, that we felt his only hope would be through what we then called "moral psychology" and we doubted if even that would have any effect. However, he did become sold on the ideas contained in this book. He has not had a drink for a great many years. I see him now and then and he is as fine a specimen of manhood as one could wish to meet." "I earnestly advise every alcoholic to read this book through, and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray." And it's signed William D. Silkworth in subsequent editions.

When they talk about the second step, the return to sanity you can start to see the recovery process unfold. If you follow the word origin of sanity, you'll find that it didn't necessarily come from a psychological or medical field. It came from the

legal field. And if you search back, you'll find about 400 years ago, the insanity defense was developed over in Europe. And what had happened was, there were some stiff penalties for stealing and every once in a while you would get someone who was obviously mentally impaired. He obviously had some mental impairment and he would steal an apple off of the fruit vendor's cart and get arrested. And the punishment is like ten years in jail banishment to Australia or something. Obviously the punishment is overboard for someone who can't understand the difference between right and wrong, good or bad. They didn't have that capacity available because they were mentally challenged. So the judges got tired of handing out these horribly stiff sentences to people that they didn't feel deserved them. They didn't know what they were doing. So the insanity defense was formulated. Now, when they talk about being restored to sanity, if the alcoholic is not sane, then they are not able at certain times to access right and wrong, good or bad. They're not responsible. Now, you know, there's going to be some people that disagree with that, but if you cannot access right thinking, if you can't understand the difference between truth and false, if you don't have access to that, are you really responsible? And that's where restored to sanity comes in. We need to be restored to sanity. Being restored to sanity means being restored to a right understanding.

This book is a textbook or a recipe for finding a power that works. There are certainly a lot of people with really valid beliefs in God. They're fervently passionately faithful. However, they're still drinking. There was another key to this whole thing. Bill Wilson figured it out, through some trial and some error, and this is basically a spiritual path, a set of spiritual exercises and disciplines that lead to a faith that works, and works against alcoholism. So that really is what the big book is. It's, like any spiritual text, it's valid in any period of time. It's going to be valid five hundred years from now. People are going to be getting sober using the book Alcoholics Anonymous for a long time to come.

### Bills Story 1

If you get really interested in AA history you will find many books that cover a lot of topics. There have been numerous biographies that tell the story of Bill Wilson. Some of these area conference approved books and some lay outside of any GSO oversight.

By putting all of this information together it really paints an authentic picture of what Bill Wilson was like. In his childhood, a few things happened that were pivotal in how his character developed. One, one of them was when he was very, very young. His father was, was a stone cutter. He worked in the marble mines in Vermont and then later all over the Northern Hemisphere. What happened was the marble played out East Dorset and Manchester where he was living and his father chose to follow the marble. He moved up to Canada and left the family. So Bill Wilson, in all actuality, became fatherless at that time. He had very little contact with his father after that. And his mother continued for a time living then with her parents, the Griffiths. Many people still travel to East Dorset to go to the Wilson house, the original hotel that the Griffiths operated.

But as Bill Wilson was growing up, his mother then became very interested in the medical world, disappeared to get training and became a doctor. Bill was mainly raised by his grandparents. That's something that will put a crack in your spirit as you're growing up...to have both parents leave you behind.

An event like this can affect you in different ways as far as how your character develops...

Bill became the type of person that had to be a number one guy. He ended up being very much attached to the image he thinks he's giving off to other people and this may or may not have helped to develop the type of spiritual condition that can lead to alcoholism. Alcoholics can be impacted in their early years by things like this that can contribute becoming dependent on alcohol and drugs.

*"War fever ran high in the New England town to which we new, young officers from Plattsburgh were assigned and we were flattered when the first citizens took us to their homes, making us feel heroic." Bill was a World War One vet. "Here was love, applause, war; moments sublime with intervals hilarious. I was part of life at last and in the midst of the excitement I discovered liquor. I forgot the strong warnings and the prejudices of my people concerning drink." His grandfather was an alcoholic and had a religious conversion experience. One day he walked up on the mountain with a bottle of booze and he had a transformational experience up on that mountain. When he came back down from the mountain, it was Sunday. He went to the next door church, pushed the preacher aside and started talking about God. Prior to that day he was very much an agnostic.*

His grandfather had gotten over drinking through a religious conversion experience so there were warnings in the house about liquor. His grandfather had been a bad drunk and owned a bar.

*"I was part of life at last and in the midst of the excitement, I discovered liquor. In time we sailed for 'over there.' I was very lonely and again turned to alcohol. We landed in England. I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved, I wandered outside. My attention was caught by doggerel on an old tombstone...'Here lies a Hampshire Grenadier, who caught his death drinking cold small beer. A good soldier is never forgot, whether he dieth by musket or by pot*

*"Ominous warning which I failed to heed. Twenty-two and a veteran of foreign wars, I went home at last. I fancied myself a leader for had not the men of my battery given me a special token of appreciation? My talent for leadership, I imagined, would place me at the head of vast enterprises which I would manage with the utmost assurance." This is a great picture of someone with a huge ego.*

*"I took a night course and obtained employment as investigator for a surety company." Bill did go to law school but missed one of the last exams. He would have been a lawyer and would have finished his degree but he just didn't show.*

Many alcoholics have the capacity to be a good starter. This can be one of the attributes of the alcoholic.

*"The drive for success was on. I'd prove to the world I was important. My work took me to Wall Street and little by little I became interested in the market. Many people lost money but some became very rich. Why not I? I studied economics and business as well as law. Potential alcoholic that I was, I nearly failed my law course. At one of the finals, I was too drunk to think or write. Though my drinking was not yet continuous, it disturbed my wife. We had long talks when I would still her forebodings by telling her that men of genius conceived their best projects when drunk, that the most majestic constructions of philosophic thought were so derived."* Don't you love that?

*"By the time I had completed the course, I knew that law was not for me. The inviting maelstrom of Wall Street had me in its grip. Business and financial leaders were my heroes. Out of this alloy of drink and speculation, I commenced to forge the weapon that one day would turn in its flight like a boomerang that all but cut me to ribbons. Living modestly, my wife and I saved \$1000. It went into certain securities, then cheap and rather unpopular. I rightly imagined that they would some day have a great rise. I failed to persuade my broker friends to send me out looking over factories and managements, but my wife and I decided to go anyway. I had developed a theory that most people lost money in stocks through ignorance of markets. I discovered many more reasons later."* What Bill was doing was trying to talk you out of your money so that he could invest it and then share in the profits. That basically was his economic model. And he went around to these businesses and said "Listen, I will go and I will study these businesses up close and personal. I will meet with everybody at these factories and these industries and I will find out what's really going on. And then I can tell you whether or not it's worth investing in the stock." But he couldn't get anybody to really pay him for it so he decides he would go and he would do it on his own and then he would sell the information.

He became one of the first stock analysts. He would show up in these towns and would go to the bars. He would drink and wait for the workers to get off work, come to the bar and then he'd find out information about the company.

*"We gave up our positions and off we roared on a motorcycle, the sidecar stuffed with tent, blankets, a change of clothes, and three huge volumes of a financial reference service. Our friends thought a lunacy commission should be appointed. Perhaps they were right. I had had some success at speculation, so we had a little money, but once we worked on a farm for a month to avoid drawing on our small capital. That was the last honest manual labor on my part for many a day. We covered the whole eastern United States in a year. At the end of it, my reports to Wall Street procured me a position there and the use of a large expense account. The exercise of an option brought in more money, leaving us with a profit of several thousand dollars for that year. For the next few years, fortune threw money and applause my way. I had arrived. My judgment and ideas were followed by many to the tune of paper millions. The great boom of the late twenties was seething and swelling. Drink was taking an important and exhilarating part in my life."* Back then it was expected that you would take people out drinking if they were clients of yours. You would be given money to use in expense accounts to take these people out and wine, dine and take them to the clubs.

*"There was loud talk in the jazz places uptown. Everyone spent in thousands and chattered in millions. Scoffers could scoff and be damned. I made a host of fair-weather friends."* Here his drinking is beginning to show signs of problems. *"My drinking assumed more serious proportions, continuing all day and almost every night. The remonstrances of my friends terminated in a row and I became a lone wolf. There were many unhappy scenes in our sumptuous apartment. There had been no real infidelity, for loyalty to my wife, helped at times by extreme drunkenness, kept me out of those scrapes."*

*"in 1929, I contracted golf fever. We went at once to the country, my wife to applaud while I started out to overtake Walter Hagen."* Walter Hagen was one of the very successful golfers back then.

*"Liquor caught up with me much faster than I came up behind Walter. I began to be jittery in the morning. Golf permitted drinking every day and every night. It was fun to carom around the exclusive course which had inspired such awe in me as a lad. I acquired the impeccable coat of tan one sees upon the well-to-do. The local banker watched me whirl fat checks in and out of his till with amused skepticism. Abruptly in October 1929, hell broke loose on the New York Stock Exchange. After one of those days of inferno, I wobbled from a hotel bar to a brokerage office. It was eight o'clock, five hours after the market closed. The ticker still clattered. I was staring at an inch of the tape which bore the inscription XYZ32. It had been 52 that morning. I was finished and so were many of my friends. The papers reported men jumping to death from the towers of high finance. That disgusted me. I would not jump. I went back to the bar. My friends had dropped several million since ten o'clock. So what? Tomorrow was another day. As I drank, the old fierce determination to win came back."* Many of the people who lost money in the Great Depression did so because they borrowed money to buy the stocks. You could put a down payment on that stock and then own it, but if the stock went down they would call you on it and you would have to pay back whatever the loss was. Because the stock market was going up like crazy in those days, a lot of people did that. Because by doing this for a small amount of money, you stood to gain huge amounts of profit.

*"The next spring I telephoned a friend in Montreal. He had plenty of money left and thought I had better go to Canada. By the following spring, we were living in our accustomed style. I felt like Napoleon returning from Elba. No St. Helena for me! But drinking caught up with me again and my generous friend had to let me go. This time we stayed broke."* This guy knew about Bill's drinking, and made him swear that he wasn't going to drink. He had to sign a piece of paper saying, "I promise I won't drink or you will fire me." The issue here that alcoholics should pay attention to is, he had everything to lose and nothing to gain from taking a drink. And he took a drink. He knew that he would get caught, he knew that he would get fired, he knew that he was going to be ruined financially he drank anyway.

This is one of the most misunderstood aspects about alcoholism. People really think they can just make a decision to not

drink and then not drink.

Bill threw his life away on one drunk, and he knew he was doing it. He did not have the power to not go to the bar and get drunk. This led him to really being able to put together step one and, and the powerlessness that manifests in an alcoholic. *"We went to live with my wife's parents. I found a job then lost it as the result of a brawl with a taxi driver. Mercifully no one could guess that I was to have no real employment for five years or hardly draw a sober breath."* He ended up moving back to a relatively modest apartment in Brooklyn and his wife got a job at one of the Macy's department stores. Bill was so ill by this time he just could not work. When you have to drink almost all the time, it's really hard to get a job.

Today there's very few employment opportunities where they'll allow you to drink at work. It's being forced on workers by insurance companies who are tired of paying liability claims on drunken accidents. It's becoming less and less acceptable for people to be impaired in the work environment. This is a good thing because a lot of people are get into recovery through some form of intervention or losing multiple jobs.

*"My wife began to work in a department store, coming home exhausted to find me drunk. I became an unwelcome hanger-on at brokerage places."* We can picture him just staggering around drunk.

*"Liquor ceased to be a luxury, it became a necessity. Bathtub gin, two bottles a day, and often three, got to be routine."* Bathtub gin was distilled alcohol and juniper.

*"Sometimes a small deal would net a few hundred dollars and I would pay my bills at the bars and delicatessens. This went on endlessly, and I began to awaken very early in the morning shaking violently."* By the time you start to detox from alcohol every morning, you've been going to detox, what has happened the night before is you've poisoned yourself. You've poisoned yourself with alcohol. It's actually looked on by medical professionals as alcohol poisoning. If you're unlucky enough to pass out in somebody's house that doesn't understand it, you'll wake up in the hospital and they'll be pumping your stomach. Alcohol poisoning can result in the shakes or the delirium tremens when you sober up. Then you need to start drinking again, which is a really bad cycle to be caught in. If that is happening to someone, they're in a lot of trouble. They need medical help and need it fast. If you have to drink in the morning to keep from going into convulsions, or hallucinations, you need medical help.

*"A tumbler full of gin followed by half a dozen bottles of beer would be required if I were to eat any breakfast. Nevertheless, I still thought that I could control the situation and there were periods of sobriety which renewed my wife's hope."* Bill would go to Townes Hospital and go through the detox procedure and afterward he could remain sober for periods of time. A lot of alcoholics can remain sober for periods of time. The problem is, if you've crossed the line into alcoholism, the time and place will come when you will drink again. It may be a day, it may be a week, it may be ten years. But the time and the place is going to come. The mental obsession is going to overcome all other thoughts and you're going to put alcohol back into your body. That is the sign of a real alcoholic. *"Gradually things got worse. The house got taken over by the mortgage holder, my mother-in-law died, my wife and father-in-law became ill. Then I got a promising business opportunity. Stocks were at the low point of 1932 and I had somehow formed a group to buy."* Probably at a bar. *"I was to share generously in the profits. Then I went on a prodigious bender and the chance vanished. I woke up. This had to be stopped. I saw I could not take so much as one drink. I was through forever."* If you look in Bill Wilson's bible, you can see where he has put many promises into it. "I swear on this bible I will never drink again." And then there will be another one, "I really, really swear this time that I will never drink again." And then there's another one, "I absolutely one hundred percent this time definitely swear I will never drink again." And he was swearing on that family bible for years. *"Before then, I had written lots of sweet promises but my wife happily observed that this time I meant business. And so I did. Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It hadn't even come to mind. Someone had pushed a drink my way and I had taken it. Was I crazy? I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that. Renewing my resolve, I tried again. Some time passed and confidence began to be replaced by cock-sureness. I could laugh at the gin mills. Now I had what it takes! One day I walked into a café to telephone. In no time I was beating on the bar asking myself how it happened. As the whiskey rose to my head, I told myself I would manage better next time, but I might as well get good and drunk then. And I did."* In 1989 the author went into a 28-day treatment program. After that I was in the middle of outpatient therapy, I was going to support groups and one day on the way to a support group meeting, the thought crossed my mind that it's been so long since I've had a drink, I'll bet you if I, if I got drunk, I would do this outpatient and this support group stuff at a different level. I'd really be enthusiastic because I'd be reminded how terrible it is to be drunk. So I bought a gallon of vodka and drank it.

I drank a gallon of vodka to improve my sobriety. This is just one way the obsession of the mind works. It doesn't care how it gets alcohol into your body. It can happen suddenly, the thought crosses your mind that whiskey and milk works great. It can happen very deviously. It doesn't matter how it happens. It happens. That's the problem. It happens and alcohol goes back into your body. *"The remorse, horror and hopelessness of the next morning are unforgettable. The courage to do battle was not there. My brain raced uncontrollably and there was a terrible sense of impending calamity,"* That's a description of the paranoia that happens during detox. *"I hardly dared cross the street, lest I collapse and be run down by an early morning truck, for it was scarcely daylight. An all night place supplied me with a dozen glasses of ale. My writhing nerves were stilled at last. A morning paper told me the market had gone to hell again. Well, so had I. The market would recover but I wouldn't. No, not now. Then a mental fog settled down. Gin would fix that. So two bottles and oblivion."* So what he did was, in the middle of his pitiful and incomprehensible moralization, during his detox, he got a hold of some alcohol and talked himself out of that detox and back into oblivion. *"The mind and body are marvelous*

*mechanisms, for mine endured this agony two more years. Sometimes I stole from my wife's slender purse when the morning terror and madness were on me. Again I swayed dizzily before an open window or the medicine cabinet where there was poison, cursing myself for a weakling. There were flights from city to country and back, as my wife and I sought escape. Then came the night when the physical and mental torture was so hellish I feared I would burst through my window, sash and all. Somehow I managed to drag my mattress to a lower floor, lest I suddenly leap.*" Okay, picture this...how out of your mind do you have to be, he's living in like a five story apartment building, he's probably on one of the top stories. He's so afraid that he's going to lose control and run through the window and crash down and kill himself on the street. Then he grabs his mattress and he starts dragging it down the stairs past all the other tenants in the building so that he can sleep in the hallway, down at the bottom of the apartment building.

This is a picture of incredible alcoholic insanity. *"A doctor came with a heavy sedative."* Back then they would use paraldehyde or another strong sedative. Bob Smith Junior was a speaker who I heard one time at an event in New York City. He was telling the story of how he smelled the paraldehyde when he walked in from school and he knew that there was a drunk being detoxed by his father upstairs. The smell of paraldehyde would go through the house. Paraldehyde would just knock you unconscious for a couple of days.

*"Next day found me drinking both gin and sedative, this combination soon landed me on the rocks."* So now Bill Wilson is not only drinking, he's drinking and drugging by now. These sedatives that were provided for him were prescribed but they were very, very heavy sedatives and he was definitely drinking and drugging toward the end. *"This combination soon landed me on the rocks. People feared for my sanity. So did I. I could eat little or nothing when drinking and I was forty pounds underweight. My brother-in-law is a physician and through his kindness and that of my mother, I was placed in a nationally-known hospital for the mental and physical rehabilitation of alcoholics. Under the so-called belladonna treatment, my brain cleared."* The author was in high school and there was an area where we would smoke and a lot of people would bring in drugs and sell them and pass them around. One day a guy brought in a big bag of belladonna and we all asked, "What's that?" He goes, "Oh it's belladonna, it's poisonous weed. And if you, if you eat a bunch of it, it gets you high." So five or six of us took a handful of belladonna and ate it. The reaction I got was not fun. It had a type of a hallucinogenic effect that effected my vision. I went temporarily partially blind. I remember going back to school the next day and everybody's going, "Hey, did you go blind?" "Yeah I went blind too!" It was a bad drug. So if they were using this for alcohol detox then we are all lucky they've invented better things.

*"Hydrotherapy and mild exercise helped much."* Hydrotherapy was a process where they had these big shower cubicles with multiple shower heads and they would wheel you in strapped down with restraints. They would hit you with hot water then hit you with cold water over and over. What this did for alcoholism, I have no idea, but at least they ended up with a clean detoxing drunk. *"Best of all, I met a kind doctor who explained that, though certainly selfish and foolish, I had been seriously ill, bodily and mentally."* This was of course Doctor Silkworth; we read his opinion earlier on.

*"It relieved me somewhat to learn that in alcoholics the will is amazingly weakened when it comes to combating liquor, though it often remains strong in other respects. My incredible behavior in the face of a desperate desire to stop was explained. Understanding myself now, I fared forth in high hope. For three or four months the goose hung high. I went to town regularly and even made a little money. Surely this was the answer – self-knowledge."* So he knew that he could not take one drink at all, but also what Silkworth was telling him was that his willpower was reduced. So he thinks by knowing his willpower is reduced at certain times, he can remember that and he'll be safe and protected. The problem is, you're not.

*"But it was not, for the frightful day came when I drank once more. The curve of my declining moral and bodily health fell off like ski jump. After a time I returned to the hospital. This was the finish, the curtain, it seemed to me. My weary and despairing wife was informed that it would all end with heart failure during delirium tremens or I would develop a wet brain, perhaps within a year."* A wet brain is basically dry brain. The alcoholic can up from a drunk completely dehydrated. This can be so profound that the brain actually dehydrates and function is reduced. It gets to such a point that the brain gets so dehydrated that you can end up getting what's called wet brain, which is your brain functions are permanently impaired. There's a lot of asylums and a lot of rest home type places in the country where people are in there suffering from wet brain. They can sit there for forty years having people change their diapers, feed them with feeding tubes and there is no cure. And it can happen after a series of really, really heavy drinking binges where you dehydrate your brain. Once those brain cells are gone, they're gone.

*"She would soon have to give me over to the undertaker or to the asylum."* That's what they had back then, they had the undertaker and they had the asylum. Nobody got out alive. Until some of the spiritual programs started to happen like the Oxford Groups nobody got out of alcoholism alive except that every once in a while there would be somebody with a religious conversion experience. Otherwise you were doomed. So there weren't a lot of places that really wanted to deal with you. *"They did not need to tell me. I knew and almost welcomed the idea. It was a devastating blow to my pride. I, who had thought so well of myself and my abilities, of my capacity to surmount obstacles, was conceded at last. Now I was to plunge into the dark, joining that endless procession of sots who had gone on before. I thought of my poor wife. There had been much happiness after all. What I would not give to make amends. But that was over now."* Bill got to the point of complete despair. When you have a doctor tell you that you have a weakened will, you are not going to be able to stay away from alcohol and you have an allergy to the body which is forcing you to drink and poison yourself more and more, that's a very bad diagnosis. The book says doctors are loath to tell us the whole truth sometimes. The thing about this book is it offers a solution. Medically speaking, what Dr. Silkworth saw in the twenty thousand alcoholics he treated was, once you get to that stage of alcoholism, you do not have much hope. You are going to drink yourself to death, into

an asylum, or you're going to have to be locked up. Those, those were the choices and that's not a pretty picture to paint to the family. That's basically like telling the, telling the family, "Your loved one has stage four cancer and has anywhere from two weeks to six months to live." *"No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master."* This experience led Bill to putting together the first step of recovery in the twelve-step model. You have been defeated. You cannot marshal anything on your own that's going to be able to successfully battle this. Now there's a scale of alcoholism. There are heavy drinkers, and there are potential alcoholics and there are people who haven't gone down the scale very far who may be able to use self-knowledge and, and a fierce determination to walk away from the trap of alcohol. But once you cross the line you aren't going to be able to come back. The chronic alcoholic is not going to be able to walk away from it without a transformational experience happening to them. *"Trembling I stepped from the hospital a broken man. Fear sobered me for a bit. Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink and on Armistice Day 1934."* He finally really thought he was going to be able to stay sober after that last detox. On Armistice Day, he showed up at a golf club. He hadn't been golfing in a while and he decided, "I've been sober a couple of months, I'm gonna go golf." He's sitting at the bar having an club soda and he's explaining to the bartender about alcoholism and how he's an alcoholic about the mental obsession. He's going on and on about the craving and he's telling him all his war stories about how bad the drinking was and how many times he'd been in the hospital and how the doctor said this is a fatal condition, he's going to drink himself to death. He's talking to the bartender, having club sodas and the bartender basically says to him, "wow, you're really amazing...you've gone through this and here you are drinking club soda" and five minutes later he asks for tumbler of gin. And the bartender goes, "after what you just told me, you have to be completely insane to take a drink."

And Bill says something like, "Yeah, I know, I must be insane, make it a double." This is how insidious the obsession of the mind can be. *"Everyone became resigned to the certainty that I would have to be shut up somewhere or would stumble along to a miserable end. How dark it is before the dawn! In reality that was the beginning of my last debauch. I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes. Near the end of that bleak November, I sat drinking in my kitchen. With a certain satisfaction, I reflected there was enough gin concealed about the house to carry me through that night and the next day. My wife was at work. I wondered whether I dared hide a full bottle of gin near the head of our bed. I would need it before daylight."*

Bill's drinking experience is in the first eight pages of Bill's story. In the second eight pages it talks about how he got sober, his experience going through the steps and what it's like. A good exercise for someone is to highlight everything on the first eight pages of Bill's story that they relate to...drinking, thinking, behavior. Highlight everything that Bill did that you relate to from your own personal experience. And in the second eight pages of Bill's story, highlight anything that you have resistance to. Any of the things that Bill said he did to recover that you feel unwilling to do. And that'll give them some kind of an idea of where someone is with their first step truth.

Personally I thought I had a dark complicated personality during my drinking days. Someone who saw truth at such a level that it caused me great anguish and I needed to drink to overcome this unbelievable acute consciousness that I had. I thought I was so more in tune to what really goes on than anybody else. I had intellectual grandiosity. I was insane. I was dying of alcoholism and the mind was being hijacked into doing whatever it needed to do to get the alcohol back into the body. The alcohol was more important than any thought processes I might have had.

The alcoholic is always in more trouble than they think they are. And the twelve-step recovery process is a more significant answer to their problems than they'll ever give it credit for, especially at the beginning.

I believe that you don't have to go to the depths of despair that Bill Wilson went to. You don't have to be drinking bathtub gin and be unemployed for eight years. There's help out there. There's interventionary methods of getting your life back together.

I don't think that in this day and age with the advent of addictions and alcoholism treatment, EAP counselors in large companies, people being trained in brief interventions like our doctors, police, all those people are, they're starting to get trained in brief interventions so that they can actually see alcoholism and point it out to you, "it's an illness and you're ill and you need treatment" Now all we have to do is figure out why the government has made it almost impossible to pay for treatment.

## Bill's Story 2

We went through the first eight pages of Bill's Story, which is, which is basically what happened to Bill, a very good description of someone's alcoholic life. There's a transition point at the bottom of page eight, where you go from Bill's chronic addiction into the circumstances that unfolded that led to his recovery.

*"My musing was interrupted by the telephone."* This is Bill talking about one the last benders that he was on. *"The cheery voice of an old school friend asked if he might come over. He was sober. It was years since I could remember his coming to New York in that condition. I was amazed. Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity. I wondered how he had escaped. Of course he would have dinner, and then I could drink openly with him. Unmindful of his welfare, I thought only of recapturing the spirit of other days. There was that time we had chartered an airplane to complete a jag! His coming was an oasis in this dreary desert of futility. The very thing – an oasis! Drinkers are like that."*

The person he's talking about was Ebby Thatcher.

Ebby knew Bill from Vermont. At that time lot of the people Bill was acquainted with would summer in Vermont. Some of Bills future friends were Ebby Thatcher, Rowland Hazard and Shep Cornell. These were people who used to drink together. Ebby had a couple of instances where he ran afoul of the law. On one instance he was drinking and driving and he drove through the front of these peoples' house. He actually ended up in their kitchen in his car and he rolls down his window and he says, "Do you have a cup of coffee?" The judge gave him a very stern warning and a few short months later his family has now banished him to the summer house up in Vermont just to get rid of him because he's an embarrassment to the family. He decides he's going to go up there but he's gonna paint the house and accomplish something. So he would paint for an hour or two and then drink the rest of the day. And this one day, he had finished painting a section of his house and pigeons were flying near it and he was afraid they were gonna mess up his paint job, so he walks outside with a shotgun and he starts shooting at them. Now this is in a residential neighborhood and even back in the 30's that was looked on with some disdain.

Once again he's in front of the judge. Now, Rowland Hazard who has gotten sober enters the scene. He's the one they talk about who worked with Carl Jung later on in the book, but he'd gotten sober in the Oxford Group in New York and he had a house up in Vermont, and he intervened on Ebby's behalf. He basically went to the judge and said, "Look, if you release him...if you don't send him to jail, I'll take him. I'll take him out of state and I'll be responsible for his actions. I know how he can recover." So the judge goes, "Fine, you can have him." The Hazard name was a very big name up there politically. So the judge said, "Go ahead and take him." So Roland took Ebby Thatcher down to New York where at Sam Shoemaker's Calvary church mission he had the Oxford Group headquarters in New York..

Roland took Ebby to the mission, put him through the process with the Oxford Group program, the spiritual rejuvenation program and all of a sudden, Ebby's sober. Now, what they did in the Oxford Group is they practiced witnessing. Witnessing was basically going out and trying to save other souls, much like it is today in a lot of religions.

Soon Ebby set his sights on Bill. He had heard Bill was drinking a lot, and he pays him a visit, and this is what Bill is setting up in this paragraph. The part where he says I only thought of recapturing the spirit of older days...this is a profoundly alcoholic mind set. Alcoholics are always trying to recapture the really good times experienced when drinking, when they felt good about my life. Personally the author would reminisce about times in high school and shortly thereafter and, here I am in my early 30's still drinking and still hanging on to those good times and wondering where all those people were. It's kind of a pathetic type of place to be and I understand that a lot.

*The door opened and he stood there fresh-skinned and glowing. There was something about his eyes. He was inexplicably different. What had happened?"* Many in their first year of recovery have an experience where all of a sudden the lights come on. They've started to work the steps, maybe they're going to some support group meetings and all of a sudden you just see the lights come on and their eyes come back to life. That's really what happens in recovery from alcoholism if everything is handled correctly. *"I pushed the drink across the table. He refused it. Disappointed but curious, I wondered what had got into the fellow. He wasn't himself. 'Come, what's all this about?' I queried. He looked straight at me. Simply but smilingly, he said, 'I've got religion.' I was aghast. So that was it -- last summer an alcoholic crackpot, now, I suspected, a little cracked about religion. He has that starry-eyed look. Yes, the old boy was on fire, all right. But bless his heart, let him rant! Besides, my gin would last longer than his preaching. But he did no ranting. In a matter of fact way, he told how two men had appeared in court, persuading the judge to suspend his commitment. They had told of a simple religious idea and a practical program of action. That was two months ago and the result was self-evident. It worked! He had come to pass his experience along to me, if I cared to have it. I was shocked, but interested. Certainly I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless. He talked for hours. Childhood memories rose before me. I could almost hear the sound of the preacher's voice as I sat, on still Sundays, way over there on the hillside. There was that proffered temperance pledge I never signed, my grandfather's good natured contempt of some church people and their doings, his insistence that the spheres really had their music, but his denial of the preacher's right to tell him how he must listen, his fearlessness as he spoke of these things just before he died, these recollections welled up from the past. They made me swallow hard. That war-time day back in old Winchester Cathedral came back again. I had always believed in a power greater than myself. I had often pondered these things. I was not an atheist. Few people really are, for that means blind faith in the strange proposition that this universe originated in a cipher and aimlessly rushes nowhere. My intellectual heroes, the chemists, the astronomers, even the evolutionists, suggested vast laws and forces at work. Despite contrary indications, I had little doubt that a mighty purpose and rhythm underlay it all. How could there be so much of precise and immutable law, and no intelligence? I simply had to believe in a spirit of the universe, who knew neither time nor limitation. But that was as far as I had gone."* This is a typical reaction from the agnostic perspective. The, the agnostic is not someone who believes or thinks there is no God. They think that it's not something that can be answered. They neither think that there is not a god or there is a God that can be at all understood. Agnostic means 'without knowledge'. An agnostic would be someone without knowledge to be able to say for sure, that there's a god. Alcoholics who participate in a recovery program are put in a position where they can actually experience god. It gets to the point where the coincidences pile up so fast and furious that they just have to start seeing that there's some type of positive interventionary force or power at work on their behalf when they let themselves be open to it. The book Alcoholics Anonymous is a great starting point for someone's spiritual development and a starting point for someone to develop a personal relationship with God. It's an instruction manual in doing so. And what happened with Bill certainly brought him from believing there's some type of underlying intelligence in the universe to a direct revelation of God *"With ministers and the world's religions, I parted right there. When they talked of a god personal to me, who was love,*

*superhuman strength and direction, I became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such a theory.*" It's not unusual for someone to get into recovery and have preconceived notions and prejudices against spiritual or religious matters. There are places in this book that beg you to lay aside those prejudices. Because in those prejudices could be the thing that keeps you from accepting a program of recovery that can save your life. What I'll personally say to someone who I'm working with is, "Would you rather be right or would you rather survive?" Because it can come down to either/or. You want so much to be right with your particular religious and spiritual viewpoint that you could choose death over changing your mind. But unfortunately, some people do.

CS: It states in this book your choice could be to die an alcoholic death or to live life along spiritual lines. Those are your two choices. And what happens so often with alcoholics is, they'll say something like, "well, could you explain dying an alcoholic death in more detail?" This can be inherent in the mental condition of alcoholism. Many are in belligerent denial about some of these concepts.

The book is not trying to tell you what type of God to believe, they're trying to tell you if you don't get to a God, you're going to die. They're not trying to get you converted into any specific religion, they're basically telling you that if you don't get a personal relationship or the consciousness of God, you're going to die. And unfortunately that can be true; especially if you're really a chronic alcoholic like this book was written for.

*"To Christ I conceded the certainty of a great man, not too closely followed by those who claimed him. His moral teaching – most excellent. For myself, I had adopted those parts which seemed convenient and not too difficult. The rest I disregarded."* Certainly the Oxford Group was Christian at its core, and very evangelical. Literally they had you out there witnessing to people on street corners, actually standing on soap boxes, this was a very profoundly Christian organization. There are today many Christian people that are saying that Alcoholics Anonymous needs to go back to its Christian roots. And certainly its roots were very, very Christian. A couple of things happened in the 30's. One of them was, Bill Wilson and his crew were kind of pushed out of the Oxford Group. There's an actual letter of apology from Sam Shoemaker in the AA archives related to Bill years later, "You know we have no idea the significance of what you were putting together, Bill...we just saw all of you as a pain to deal with." What would happen was Bill would drag people off of the bar stools, out of the bowery, out of psych units, out of mental hospitals and drag them into Oxford Group meetings. They would be out of control at these meetings. Everybody's having a nice church service and all of a sudden five or six drunken men get brought into the church service by Bill Wilson. He said, "Bill, take these people somewhere else." So what Bill did was he kept the actions that seemed to work for him and for other people while he was developing the structure for Alcoholics Anonymous. He used this as he was developing the structure for the book. He basically developed this into a non-denominational, non-religious program. He felt that the spiritual principles were strong enough to not have to be supported by any particular religion and that would open the doors wide enough for people of all religions.

And Bill did it against the wishes of the Akron Group. Because the Akron Group remained an Oxford Group there was some real bad blood when Bill Wilson moved away and started his own thing. Bill did not name the group right away so Clarence Snyder from Akron who started the Cleveland group makes the claim that he started the first AA meeting ever. He states he was the first person who broke away from the Akron group and started a meeting called Alcoholics Anonymous, after the book of the same title in Cleveland.

Akron however, held on as long as they could to the Oxford Group affiliation. And then all groups finally walked away from the Oxford Group and started calling themselves Alcoholics Anonymous. You can still hear from members there's an Akron perspective and there's a New York perspective within AA. To view this you can see a broad perspective of the differences between New York and Akron. New York wanted to be more psychological and less religious. Akron always wanted to be more religious and less psychological. Those are two of, two things that are apparent when you study the literature and history of Alcoholics Anonymous back in those days. New York was much more metropolitan and it had a higher percentage of agnostics and atheists than Akron did. Dr. Bob still had the bible on the podium up until 1950, when he chaired AA meetings. That wouldn't have been tolerated in New York. And when you look at the differences between New York and Akron, also, you need to understand that New York's statistics were terrible. For people who walked through the door and meant business, New York's statistics were terrible. Akron and Cleveland's statistics were amazing. So that's an important characteristic to look at when you're deciding which type of recovery fellowship or perspective you're looking for.

If one wants to increase their odds of being able to stay sober, they should be paying attention to how the Ohio people did it. I would not be paying attention to how they did it in the 40's in New York. And, I think if a detailed study was done you would probably find that today the statistics in Ohio are better than in New York because a lot of these spiritual beliefs carry over to this day.

*"The wars which had been fought, the burnings and chicanery that religious dispute had facilitated, made me sick. I honestly doubted whether, on balance, the religions of mankind had done any good. Judging from what I had seen in Europe and since, the power of God in human affairs was negligible, the brotherhood of man a grim jest. If there was a devil, he seems the Boss Universal, and he certainly had me."* Now this is also a perspective that a lot of people have in chronic alcoholism.

If somebody would have said to me at the end of my drinking, "There absolutely is a God", I would have thought that God was very cruel because one terrible thing after the other was happening to me. However I was caught up in alcoholism and I believe we've been given free will, I think we have every right in the world to totally screw up our life.

*"But my friend sat before me, and he made the point-blank declaration that God had done for him what he could not do for himself. His human will had failed. Doctors had pronounced him incurable. Society was about to lock him up. Like*

*myself, he had admitted complete defeat. Then he had, in effect, been raised from the dead, suddenly taken from the scrap heap to a level of life better than the best he had ever known! Had this power originated in him? Obviously it had not. There had been no more power in him than there was in me at that minute and this was none at all. That floored me. It began to look as though religious people were right after all. Here was something at work in a human heart which had done the impossible. My ideas about miracles were drastically revised right then. Never mind the musty past, here sat a miracle directly across the kitchen table. He shouted great tidings. I saw that my friend was much more than inwardly reorganized. He was on a different footing. His roots grasped a new soil. Despite the living example of my friend there remained in me the vestiges of my old prejudice. The word God still aroused a certain antipathy. When the thought was expressed that there might be a God personal to me this feeling was intensified. I didn't like the idea. I could go for such conceptions as creative intelligence, universal mind, or spirit of nature, but I resisted the thought of a czar of the heavens, however loving his way might be. I have since talked with scores of men who felt the same way." These thoughts are almost universal concerning somebody coming into recovery.*

When someone is still stinking of gin and ruined their life, their wife is working because they can't and their making the gin in the bathtub, been evicted thirteen times and in the hospital nine times that year, it's, it's very difficult to shout for joy when somebody comes and twelve steps you the way Ebby did. But the, the important thing is, he put it in Bill's mind that there may be a possible recovery opportunity with this thought of God. And the truth sometimes haunts us and makes us angry. But as an alcoholic, you have to internalize it because it's gonna gnaw away at you. It's truth and deep down inside you know that it's true and you have to figure out a way to deal with it. I know that's happened to me several times, probably more than that in my life. My spiritual advisors and teachers that made me mad at first but they were the ones that I learned the most from. And I think Bill going through a very unsettled time, sitting in front of Ebby was probably a good thing. It was disturbing him about his alcoholism and it was disturbing him about the possible means of recovery. The day I tried to get sober if somebody came up to me and said, "Jesus is your answer", I would have gotten upset with them. And I wouldn't have thought it was true. . It could have been the most profound statement ever made to me, but my mind was not ready to wrap around it.

But, but sometimes those disturbances start to prepare us for accepting the truth about ourselves and about what we need to take responsibility for. And I think Bill was shaken to the core during this meeting. He never forgot it. He, he talked about sitting at that kitchen table with Ebby the rest of his life. So it was a very, very meaningful experience to him and he was not yet at that moment ready to accept God as his father, as the principal in his life or as the director, like the third step states. But he was, he was starting to become willing to change his mind.

And that's a very very important point. Of course, he's, he's arguing with Ebby, he doesn't say this in the book but he's telling Ebby that he's cracked and debating God with him. "My friend suggested that..." And then Ebby started getting mad. This is what Ebby remembered. I've, I've heard tapes of Ebby. He finally got frustrated with Bill and this is what he said. "*My friend suggested what then seemed a novel idea. He said, 'Why don't you choose your own conception of God?' Ebby said that out of frustration.*

*"And it hit me hard. It melted the icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had lived and shivered many years."* I love that line. The icy intellectual mountain in whose shadow I had shivered for many years. I really thought that I was an intellectual back when I was drinking. And that intellect was never gonna get me out of my alcoholic dilemma. It's not the intellect that saves you, it's the spirit. So he started to change his mind. "*I stood in the sunlight at last. It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning. I saw that growth could start from that point. Upon a foundation of compete willingness I might build what I saw in my friend. Would I have it? Of course I would!"* And this is another part where he's exaggerating. He went off and he relapsed, he drank again quite a few times after this meeting. He makes it sound like he, he almost got sober here at the kitchen table. But Ebby started dragging him off to Oxford Group meetings and sometimes he dragged him there drunk. And one time, Bill, in a near blackout, went up and pushed the person away from the microphone who was sharing or witnessing and just started blabbing incoherently and they had to drag him off the stage. This happened a few times as he was settling in to this new thought of the power greater than himself.

*"Thus I was convinced that God is concerned with us humans when we want Him enough."* Every single sentence is almost coordinated in this. God is concerned with us when we want Him enough. I think that there's things that God does and I think there's things that we need to do. We need to participate in the building and maintenance of our spiritual condition. We need to participate in that of our own free will. And if we do so, we put ourselves in sunlight of the spirit where God can shine down and relieve us our alcoholism, relieve us of our gravest shortcomings. This has been my experience and my experience when I've worked with other people.

But, the gift is we have a lot of freedom as human beings and we're free to screw up and we're free to learn from our screw-ups and to develop compassion because of that. There's a lot of of divine intelligence about the whole process. There are people that hang on to negative conceptions of God. One of the biggest ones is why there is so much suffering in the world.

If there's a benevolent God, why are twenty thousand people in Ethiopia dying of starvation every day? You can intellectually roll yourself into that statement and make a really strong case for or against God. The fact of the matter is, would you rather be right or would you rather survive?

And sometimes you have to resign from the debating society and have a willingness, a buy-in to this. They're asking you to just try this. If it doesn't work then you go back to whatever you had before. But this is a way out that works. And you can think your way out of this really fast. That's why it asks you to, it begs you to lay aside prejudice against organized

religion or spiritual beliefs. And, if you're in enough trouble and hurt enough, a lot of times you're willing to do that.

*"At long last I saw, I felt, I believed. Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes. A new world came into view."* This was over the course of time for Bill – he had a revelation on his detox bed many days later. It sounded like it happened to him in two minutes. *"The real significance of my experience in the cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God."* Now Bill's time frame was back in World War One. *"There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me, and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been."* The same thing happened to me. I had a real sense of God. I grew up in a great family, a really nice town. I think that only once a year at best in the school systems there would be a fist fight. It was very peaceful. It was very upper middle class. It was very safe and, there came a time when I was about thirteen where I started to act a little bit delinquently, and when you start to do crimes and be a delinquent, you don't want a loving God looking over your shoulder, keeping score. So my relationship with God started to deteriorate about then. Everybody has a different experience in the beginning of their early life. But I had a warm and fuzzy experience with God. And I chose to move away from God when I started to exert my free will because I wanted to have some fun.

*"At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens."* Now, this is important...remember that the book of Alcoholics Anonymous is the basic text laying out the twelve steps of recovery. I'm just gonna point out what steps Bill was taking and when he was taking them. Remember this was in the hospital, while he was detoxing. He would stay for about six days, while he was detoxing from alcohol for the last time. *"There I humbly offered myself to God as I then understood Him..."* That's basically the third step. *"...to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that I was nothing, that without Him I was lost."* Okay, that's basically a nice picture of someone's third step decision.

*"I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found friend take them away, root and branch."* That's basically step four and steps six and seven. *"My school mate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies."* This would be a fifth step. *"We made a list of people that I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment."* Okay, this is an eighth and a fourth step. *"I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability."* Again, that's an eighth step, looking toward his ninth step. *"I was to test my thinking by this new God consciousness within."* That's material from steps ten and eleven. *"Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure."* Okay this is a beautiful example of a very primitive form of the tenth and the eleventh steps. *"My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my creator, that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems."* This talks about many of the promises. *"Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honest and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements. Simple, but not easy, a price had to be paid. It meant the destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all."* Most people with good recovery programs, when they're agitated, doubtful, angry, uncertain; they go right to God in prayer or meditation. It's a very valid operational methodology.

There is so much power in it. The only people I know that criticize this type of thing are people who have not tried it enough and states this in the 12X12 step book.

*"These were revolutionary and drastic proposals but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound."* The last thing we're gonna do in this book is go over the spiritual appendix. In the spiritual appendix, it basically says that the spiritual experience or spiritual awakening comes in two varieties. It can come sudden but that's the minority. Mainly it comes through the educational variety. Slowly over the course of time.

I would submit something for the reader to think about. Bill Wilson went through all but the ninth and the twelfth steps in his hospital bed, in between visits with Ebby. So it was in a matter of days that he went thorough the steps. Did he have a sudden and profound spiritual awakening? Yes. People that go through the steps as completely as you can in those short periods of time usually do, but that's not the norm today in twelve-step fellowships. People take a longer amount of time to go through these steps as a rule. So they usually have the educational variety of a spiritual awakening. But you can have a sudden and profound one, but you have to do the work to have it. I don't think you can have a spiritual awakening as a result of twelve steps that you haven't taken, any more than you can return from a place that you never went to.

*"For a moment I was alarmed and I called my friend, the doctor, to ask if I were still sane. He listened in wonder as I talked. Finally he shook his head saying, 'Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang onto it. Anything is better than the way you were.'" Yeah.*

*"The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows that they are real. While I lay in the hospital, the thought came to me that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given to me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn, might work with others."* This, I think, is the most important paragraph in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. He started to see that that the twelve steps and carrying the message of them to the still suffering alcoholic was going to be important to him but could also save many lives.

There's been a lot of people that have been detoxed for alcoholism, have been hospitalized for alcoholism. For the past two thousand years, people have sought some type of treatment for alcoholics, it's very rare that they have a spiritual experience undergoing that treatment and then decide to dedicate the rest of their life to carrying this message. A lot of people are alive today because Bill came up with this thought on his hospital bed during a detox. I think many alcoholics are still here by seconds and inches and this is one of those cases. If he said, "Well I got mine, I think I'll just go back to the Oxford Group, and leave those drunks be," four million people may not have survived.

This is a very, very important paragraph historically. *"My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead."*

Anybody that relapses in a twelve step fellowship its because they are not doing this, you're not supposed to stay sober without this work.

*"For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead."* So if you are not trying to perfect your spiritual life, and you're not working and self-sacrificing for other people besides yourself, you're not supposed to get this. It's a whole shift of perspective. I think the alcoholic's whole life system is based on a selfish and self-centered foundation. Now the spiritual life asks you to shift that perception and perspective from selfish and self-centeredness, to behavior that's of service and love of others and compassion. That, that's really where the spiritual awakening shifts you to and if you don't get there, if you're still going to support group meetings just for you, and "these people are doing it wrong and I don't like the coffee", and you're not helping anybody, you are not supposed to stay sober.

*"If he did not work, he would surely drink again and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that. My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems."* I think he was more enthusiastic then Lois was. *"It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going."* This was another important point, that I think has been missed by a lot of the support groups today. One of the most important points in the early days when Bill Wilson was developing Alcoholics Anonymous was the fact that you need to go and find drunks to work with. You don't need to wait for them to ask you, you need to go and find them and work with them. And so if he was in a bad emotional state, what he needed to do was he needed to go to the hospital and find somebody who was detoxing and tell him his story and try to help him. I wish everybody in recovery was doing that today. You know how many more people would be alive if there was more people doing this twelve-step work?

So often in support groups people just relax and don't get really involved in trying to carry the message to those who are still suffering. They mistake the public relations policy of attraction rather than promotion. They relate that to their own life. That, that's the public relations policy of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is most certainly not the operational methodology. The operational methodology is go and find people who are sick and suffering and work with them. They don't care where you go. You just need to go and find them. And that's something that's really lacking in support groups today. *"We commenced to make many fast friends and a fellowship has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. The joy of living we really have, even under pressure and difficulty. I have seen hundreds of families set their feet in the path that really goes somewhere, have seen the most impossible domestic situations righted, feuds and bitterness of all sorts wiped out. I have seen men come out of asylums and resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities. Business and professional men have regained their standing. There is scarcely any form of trouble and misery which has not been overcome among us. In one western city and its environs there are one thousand of us and our families. We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek. At these informal gatherings one may often see from fifty to 200 persons. We are growing in numbers and power."* And it says in an asterisk that in 2006, AA is composed of over 106,000 groups now. *"An alcoholic in his cups is an unlovely creature." "Our struggles with them are variously strenuous, comic and tragic. One poor chap committed suicide in my home. He could not or would not see our way of life."* There was another person in Bills house who was chasing his wife around with a pair of scissors, trying to stab her. *"There is, however, a vast amount of fun about it all. I suppose some would be shocked at our seeming worldliness and levity. But just underneath there is a deadly earnestness. Faith has to work twenty-four hours a day in and through us, or we perish. Most of us feel we need look no further for utopia. We have it with us right here and now. Each day my friend's simple talk in our kitchen multiplies itself in a widening circle of peace on earth and good will to men."* That's the best story that's ever been put in this book. This is the best example of a twelve-step call and what it was like, what happens, what it's like today.

When I first read it when they first handed it to me when I was in rehab, I thought, "Bill, what a loser! And I, I gotta tell you he may have been the most significant force, at least in the top five in the 20<sup>th</sup> century as far as a social architect and, and a healing force. I really believe that. There may have been people like the Rockefellers who saved more lives than Bill did with their various medical interventions, but as far as a template for overcoming addictive illness and obsessive-compulsive disorder, this twelve-step process is unparalleled. Any legitimate treatment center for addiction or for alcoholism has to incorporate the twelve steps or its outcomes are gonna be drastically decreased. So, it's an important

book and it might have been written in the 30s, but its significance still rings true today.

In the next chapter we're gonna blow some misconceptions out of the water, because there's so much really strong material in *There is a Solution* that is overlooked, glossed over, whitewashed today in recovery processes. And we're gonna really see what the first step involves. I believe the first step is the most misunderstood step in any recovery fellowship in America today. It's amazing how many people misunderstand it.

A thorough understanding of *There is a Solution* and more about alcoholism paints a beautiful picture of powerlessness. An inner admission to powerlessness is really necessary to make it through the rest of the steps.

## There Is A Solution 1

The big book is a wonderful book. The first time you read it you really didn't get it. You skim through it pretty quickly in a treatment center and what happens is, almost universally, people don't give this its due. They fail to recognize the significance of the answers for their problems that are in this book. Sometimes it takes a serious time to study and be taught the material. You need to be taken through this with someone who has a lot of experience with it to really get into the solutions that are available for you and the situations and problems that you have in your life. This is a book where it's better to have it taught than to have someone just read it, much like any other textbook. If you were to go to the store and buy a master's level calculus book and take it home and just read the book, would you be a master at calculus? No, you really need to go to the classes. It needs to be taught to you by someone who understands it at a deep level so that any questions you have or any things you don't understand can be explained.

This is chapter two. We're reading out of a second edition. Again we don't purport to be experts in recovery, or in alcoholism or in Alcoholics Anonymous. We're not even admitting any membership in such a place. But we've gained some knowledge and some experience with this book. We especially don't speak for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole but we can share our experience with this. *There is a Solution*. "*We of Alcoholics Anonymous know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Bill. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem.*" One of the controversies today in the recovery community is recovering/recovered. You're going to get really good people who are gonna be able to explain their position on this and it's gonna be a valid position. Someone will be saying, "I'm always gonna be recovering." And, the way they mean it, that's absolutely true. And then you're gonna hear people announce that they're recovered. And they way they mean it, it's absolutely true also. But there's, a lot of controversy in these statements. Let's look at it this way, if you have an illness and you're recovered from the illness, the symptoms are removed. If you have an illness and you're cured of the illness, then the illness itself is removed. As an alcoholic you're going to have certain problems with alcoholism that are going to persist. But that doesn't mean that the symptoms can't be removed. One is – we can without a drink and if we pick up a drink, we will be drunk very soon, sometimes that night. Because our liver, our pancreas have deteriorated and they're not gonna get better. They're in a state where they metabolize alcohol alcoholically. And, that means we get the phenomenon of craving if we ingest it, and we're going to be in trouble.

The other thing that I need to be aware of is that without participation in the maintenance of our spiritual condition, we can lay *ourselves* open to a relapse through the mental obsession. The mental obsession is the strange mental blank spot, the subtle form of insanity that precedes the first drink. There are so many alcoholics out there that drink, and people that don't understand this illness, they really can't believe it. "It's bad for you, why are you doing it? Why is it that every day you start drinking again? Don't you know that this is causing your problems?" It's because of the obsession of the mind. It's an overriding thought that a drink would be a good thing right now, even though it's probably the worst thing right. It's something that at a certain point in the alcoholic's life that they can't, fight. It's, it's bigger than they are. And that's one of the things that's really misunderstood about alcoholism. Why don't we just hitch up our bootstraps?

*"We are average Americans. All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social and religious backgrounds. We are people that normally would not mix."*

*"But there exists among us a fellowship, friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from a shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways. The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined."* Think about the movie Titanic. The two costars of that movie...one was a woman that came from the upper echelons of society. She had that big diamond that was about the size of a football. she was from the absolute aristocracy and she fell in love with a guy who was down in steerage and this caused a lot of problems.

Those two classes of people do not mix. The families got involved and they had to run around and hide. The same type of thing can happen in the twelve-step fellowships, but once you've recognized that you have a problem, once you're getting in the lifeboat, everybody is equal. You'll be in a meeting or something and a doctor will come in, and he'll be new and he'll start talking and some, some plumber in the back will go, "Shut up, you don't know anything."

And, and the doctor doesn't. It's hysterical but there are no class distinctions in the fellowship, that's basically what it's saying in this book

*"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action."* We have a common solution,

the common solution are the twelve steps and the spiritual principles in this book, and if they are applied correctly, we can join in brotherly and harmonious action and we can be what he describes as recovered alcoholics. *"This is the great news this books carries to those who suffer from alcoholism. An illness of this sort, and we have come to believe it an illness, involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can."* This book basically describes alcoholism as an illness. Around 1956 or so the American Medical Society declared that alcoholism and drug addiction to be considered diseases. There's still some controversy about this, but if the American Medical Society is okay with calling it a disease, we are too. But a lot of times I don't refer to it as such because there's still some controversy, there is still a lot of controversy involved with it. *"If a person has cancer, no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents, anyone can increase the list."* Alcoholism is a disease; but very few people are going to look at it that way. There's an amazing amount of stigma that still revolves around alcoholism and drug addiction. "They're doing it to themselves, why don't they just stop"? If someone was angry and resentful and knocking over tables because their cancer was at a very advanced stage, they're usually going to get treated differently than an alcoholic in advanced stages where they do the same things, and that's really unfortunate. If you're gonna call it a disease, let's promote treating it like one and that's just not what happens out there in the world, unfortunately. *"We hope this volume will inform and comfort those who are, or who may be affected. There are many. Highly competent psychiatrists who have dealt with us have found it sometimes impossible to persuade an alcoholic to discuss his situation without reserve. Strangely enough, wives, parents and intimate friends usually find us even more unapproachable than do the psychiatrist and the doctor."* It's funny, as a whole we pay thousands of dollars to psychiatrists and counselors and we lie to them about what is really going on, we didn't even give them a reasonable opportunity to help us. We wanted help so badly but we interfered and sabotaged that help in every way we could. It's a really unorthodox illness.

So this next paragraph is in hyphenated font, which means important.

*"But the ex-problem drinker who has found the solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours. Until such an understanding is reached, little or nothing can be accomplished."* Now what if that paragraph is true? If an alcoholic doesn't relate to another alcoholic who's actually recovered, nothing can be accomplished? That's an important statement that he makes. The author states, there was no one that could talk to me about my drinking. No one, I believe that no one could possibly understand the dark, complicated situation and emotional state that I was in toward the end of my drinking. I had to be so different, my case had to be so different...I had to be so unique, my whole persona was crying that to the rooftops. That the first person who was able to get through to me at any level was a counselor who was himself in long-term recovery, he said, "Kid, here's the way it is..." He was the first person that ever pinned me to the wall. We believe that there are a lot of well-meaning family and friends, we believe that there are a lot of well-meaning clergymen, we know there are a lot of people out there that if they could help us, they would. But the fact of the matter is, an alcoholic in recovery understands exactly what we're going through. They've been there. And they can talk about being there and then they can talk about what it's like to not be there.

I've recovered and you don't need to be suffering like this, and they can get through to us at a level other people can't. *"That the man who's making the approach has had the same difficulty, alcoholism, that he knows that he obviously knows what he is talking about. Now this whole department shouts at the new prospect that he is a man with a real answer, that he has no attitude of holier than thou, nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be helpful, that there are no fees to pay, no axes to grind, no people to please, no lectures to be endured, these are the conditions we have found to be most effective. After such an approach, many take up their beds and walk again."* Taking up your bed, that was an old term for when you stopped being sick, you got out of bed and they changed all your sheets. That's taking up your bed and walking again. This is a description about how best to approach someone who, who is suffering from alcoholism when you, yourself, have, have recovered. And, and it's true...there are ways to do it that are, that are beneficial and there's ways to screw it up. There was a person that the author was alerted to the other day that was in the emergency room at a local hospital. This individual was in there and they actually seized on the medical floor. Hospitals treat your symptomologies. They'll put you on anti-consultants, they'll put you on benzos to help you detox, but they're not in there to promote recovery from alcoholism, that's not what they do. We started sending people in one at a time to tell their stories. This is the way Doctor Bob and Bill Wilson used to do it. They used to put you in a hospital and then send in the boys. And every hour on the hour, you send in somebody to tell their story. Not to tell somebody, "you got to shape up." instead they tell their story about what it was like, what happened and what it's like today. And, we've done this several times and one time where about fifteen people had gone in to see this one guy. Finally he goes, "Okay! Okay! You guys can stop comin' in! I'm with ya!" And, and he ended up getting into recovery. You have to place yourself in a position like you would want someone coming to you. You don't want to go in there with an attitude or an ego, you need to go in there just to be helpful.

If you're in recovery from alcoholism, it is helpful to carry the message to other people. Certainly this book is pointing that out. *"None of us makes a sole vocation of this work, nor do we think its effectiveness would be increased if we did. We feel that elimination from our drinking is but a beginning."* That is an important line. "We feel that the elimination from our drinking is but a beginning." At times we have a sobriety problem. To illustrate this the author will tell a story from personal experience:...back in the last three or four years of my drinking, I would get off of work, I would get in my car and

I would fly to the liquor store, grab the bottle and I'd get up to have it rung up and as I was walking out to the car with my bottle, I'd start to feel a sigh of relief. Now, I might as well have gone up to the clerk at the liquor store and said, "Clerk, clerk, hurry up! I've got a real problem here! I got a problem, I'm sober! You gotta help me out, hurry up, hurry up! Ring this thing up, ring it up! Get rid of this old lady in front of me, I'm in a hurry here, I'm sober!"

Now think about it, does he really have a drinking problem? No, the drink is a very bad solution to his alcoholism. The alcoholism is that unbelievable uncomfortability. That lack of being able to deal with the restlessness, irritable, discontented, depressed, anxious, resentful, and remorseful emotional condition. We are overburdened with this sobriety and gotta get a bottle. We have a sobriety problem so when it says that we feel that the elimination of our drinking is but a beginning, we understand what that means. You pull away our booze and now it's time to start to work on learning how to be sober and be okay too. There are a lot of people out there who think, "I just don't drink no matter what." And they're cranky; they're still suffering from alcoholism. We're not supposed to just hang on by our fingernails to sobriety. We're supposed to get to a place of freedom; we're supposed to get to a place of recovery where we're not tortured by that emotional spiritual and psychic burden the way we were when we were drinking.

*"A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs. All of us spend much of our spare time in the sort of effort which we are going to describe. A few are fortunate enough to be so situated that they can give nearly all their time to the work."* Much of our spare time....so if you're an alcoholic and you're relapsing, ask yourself this question. Do you spend much of your spare time trying to help other people? Because if you don't, you're not supposed to get sober. *"A few are fortunate enough to be so situated that they can give nearly all of their time to this work"*

*"If we keep on the way we are going, there is little doubt that much good will result, but the surface of the problem would hardly be scratched. Those of us who live in large cities are overcome by the reflection that close by hundreds are dropping into oblivion every day. Many could recover if they had the opportunity we have enjoyed. How then shall we present that which has been so freely given us?"*

*"We have concluded to publish an anonymous volume setting forth the problem as we see it."* That's in the next couple of chapters. *"We shall bring to the task our combined experience and knowledge. This should suggest a useful program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem."* There is a program of recovery in this book, and to this day, Alcoholics Anonymous has never published another manual for recovery. There's Living Sober, and the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, and those can be helpful at certain times as a person is getting sober, but the program is in this book. So, it's very important to understand that everything starts here.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions is a supplemental volume to this volume. It was never published as a way to avoid the work in this book. You need to start with this book. *"Of necessity, there will have to be discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us so much as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal. Most of us sense that real tolerance of other people's shortcomings and viewpoints and a respect for their opinions are attitudes which make us more useful to others. Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend on our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs."* Here's another sentence of utmost importance for the people who are relapsing. *"Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend on our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs."* If you're relapsing, if you're in and out of support groups ask yourself, are your thoughts constantly on others and how you may help meet their needs, or are you stuck in self-pity and only worrying about you?

Long-term recovery has to include constant thought of others and how you may help meet their needs. This is not the most politically correct thing to say around the recovery community, but it's important. When we are really trying to be of help to others, our problems don't even seem to exist. We are worrying about other people, so it really is important, as soon as you possibly can, start helping other people, however you can do that. We would add that if I were left with just two choices, going to meetings or helping other people, we would have to say if we were just going to meetings, we would probably drink again. If we are helping other people, even if there are no meetings available, we have a good chance of staying sober.

Many people today believe that meetings are treatment for their alcoholism. Meetings are not treatment for your alcoholism. Meetings are a place to find people to help, to help your own recovery program. But meetings do not treat alcoholics. The twelve steps treat alcoholism. And that's a misunderstanding that kills many support group members every year.

It's really a deadly misunderstanding; it's a killing thing to think that meetings treat alcoholism. If you have a consistent amount of meetings that you're going to in whatever support group that you go to, that that can help your serenity level. But meetings are a place to find people to help by Sharing your experience, strength and hope. That's what they're for. You don't go there like they're a filling station. That's not what this book tells you to do. If you read in Doctor Bob and the Good Old Timers, it basically says that meetings were optional. Your work with others and your prayer meditations were essential, meetings were optional. It's turned around today and we think there's a lot of people who become meeting-dependent, and never really achieve recovery from alcoholism, because they don't address the steps.

*"You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may already be asking, 'What do I have to do?' It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically."* So the purpose for this book is to answer specifically,

what you need to do to get over your drinking. *"We shall tell you what we have done. Before going into a detailed discussion, it may be well to summarize some points as we see them. How many times people have said to us, 'I can take it or leave it alone, why can't he?', 'Why don't you drink like a gentleman or quit?', 'That fellow can't hold his liquor.' 'Why don't you try beer and wine?' 'Lay off the hard stuff.' 'His willpower must be weak.' 'He could stop if he wanted to' 'She's such a sweet girl; I should think he would stop for her sake.' 'The doctor told him that if he ever drank again, it would kill him but there he is all lit up again.'"* *"Now these are commonplace observations on drinkers that we hear all the time. Back of them is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. We see that these expressions refer to people whose reactions are very different from ours."* The alcoholic is different than the non-alcoholic.

Alcoholism is aggressive, it's all-encompassing and it's almost entirely misunderstood by people because it's so unorthodox. There's hard drinkers out there who get lit up and crash cars and get DUI's and get arrested but if they have a sufficient desire to stop drinking or to moderate, they can. The alcoholic can't. There are certain times when the alcoholic cannot make a decision to give up alcohol and have it count for anything. They're the low-bottom, chronic or real alcoholic that this book talks about. They're in a lot of trouble.

And frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices. We heard that in, in the Doctor's Opinion. People telling you that you should quit is just not an adequate defense against drinking or alcoholism. *"Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone."* That's a moderate drinker. *"Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally."* Okay so with the hard drinker, alcohol can really start to cause trouble in their life. *"It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason – ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor – becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention."* That's a description of the heavy drinker.

*"But what about the real alcoholic?"* Another thing that people don't like to hear today is when someone says "I'm a real alcoholic" or they talk about the fact that heavy drinkers might end up in the support groups. That's not something that's well received today. But Bill thought it incredibly important to describe the difference between the heavy drinker, a moderate drinker and a real alcoholic. Because the recovery from that problem could be different depending on what you were. If you could just stop or moderate and have no problem, that's all well and fine. But if you're sicker than the moderate drinker, if, you've gone down the scale far enough, you're in a lot more trouble and you can't just quit like a moderate or a heavy drinker. You need a complete transformational, spiritual awakening or personality change. If you don't you're not going to make it. So he thought it very important to show the differences between those types.

The only people that will get mad at hearing about heavy drinkers are people who aren't really sure they are real alcoholics. In step one of the Twelve and Twelve, Bill's describing all of a sudden in meetings, people started to flood in and they were barely potential alcoholics. They hadn't felt the nip of the ringer yet. They weren't as bad as we founding members. The decision was made back then for good or for bad, to open the doors wide to anyone with an alcohol history and a desire to stop drinking. The only membership requirement was the desire to stop drinking. We believe that was a correct decision, because if we can save people ten, twenty, or thirty years of escalating drinking toward chronic alcoholism by opening the doors, it's probably a good idea that they do. But there are a lot of people that don't necessarily need to undergo this spiritual recovery process that show up in the support fellowships.

They're not that sick. They can just go to meetings and they're going to be fine but sometimes they don't even understand that they're not the real alcoholics, that they're the heavy drinker. If you brought that to their attention, they would get mad. But yes, hard drinkers show up because Bill was talking about it in 1949 when he wrote the step book. Is that necessarily a bad thing? We don't think it's a bad thing unless the real alcoholic is trying to get sponsored by the heavy drinker, then that heavy drinker might say, "well, I just gave it up, kid. You just put the plug in the jug." And then the real alcoholic will die because they're not exposed to a strong enough recovery experience.

The big book movement as it's being called around the world is being very maligned in certain countries, there's one country in Europe that issued a statement from their general service office saying "The big book movement, so prevalent in America should be considered by our members to be outside the scope of Alcoholics Anonymous." Some countries are so misguided that they think people who are sharing from the Big Book should be outside the scope of Alcoholics Anonymous. That makes no sense, it's the basic text of the fellowship.

There's a lot of different people that hit the meetings...there's, certainly room for diversity. The spiritual life is broad, roomy and all-inclusive and we should try to stay out of controversy. If we're the real alcoholic and we've found recovery through application of the principles in this book, then that's what we should share with other alcoholics, and we should try to spot them. If we can spot an alcoholic who's in real trouble, then let's take responsibility, get together with them and share our experience, get them hooked on the recovery process in this book. And that may solve their problem.

*"But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker. He may or may not become a continuous hard drinker but at some stage of his drinking career, he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink."* This is an earmark of a real alcoholic. If you can have four or five beers, and go home and say "I've had enough", you are not a real alcoholic. The real alcoholic gets to a point in his drinking career where he loses all control of his liquor consumption once he starts drinking. And that's because of the phenomenon of craving. Not everybody is that chronic, but that's mainly the alcoholic's experience.

*"Here is the fellow who has been puzzling you, especially in his lack of control. He does absurd, incredible tragic things while drinking. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk. His disposition while drinking resembles his normal nature but little. He may be one of the finest fellows in the*

world. Yet let him drink for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly and even dangerously anti-social. He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept. He is often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning everything except liquor, but in that respect he is incredibly dishonest and selfish. He often possesses special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and has a promising career ahead of him. "He uses his gifts to build up a bright outlook for his family and himself and then pulls the structure down on his head by a senseless series ofsprees. He is the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around, yet early the next morning, he searches madly for the bottle he misplaced the night before. If he can afford it, he may have liquor concealed all over his house to be certain no one gets his entire supply away from him to throw down the waste pipe. As matters grow worse, he begins to use a combination of high-powered sedative and liquor to quiet his nerves so he can go to work." "Then comes the day when he simply cannot make it and gets drunk all over again. Perhaps he goes to a doctor who gives him morphine or some sedative with which to taper off. Then he begins to appear at hospitals and sanitariums." Or today, rehabs and detoxes. That's a picture of the real alcoholic, but today that's not the picture of the typical person who's showing up in the support groups.

Most people are not that bad anymore, the great news about this book is, if you're that bad, there's a solution for you in this book. So would this solution apply to people who are not that bad? Absolutely. Maybe ten percent of people who show up in support groups today would fit this description of the chronic real alcoholic.

The doors have to be so wide open that you can help everybody. But if there is somebody who is chronically relapsing and they're really trying, somebody needs to get with them and offer them a solution of depth and weight. Tact and common sense have to be used when dealing with someone. "This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify him roughly. Why does he behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it that he takes that one drink? Why can't he stay on the water wagon? What has become of the common sense and willpower that he still sometimes displays with respect to other matters? Perhaps there will never be a full answer to those questions. Opinions vary considerably as to why the alcoholic reacts differently from normal people. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for him. We cannot answer the riddle. We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this. These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion."

They're talking about the allergy of the body, the phenomenon of craving, but they shift at the top of page 23 and they start talking about the mental obsession. What is it that makes it so difficult for the alcoholic, even knowing as much as he knows about how horrible alcohol is, why does he continue to drink? There's really strong information in here about why that happens and what needs to happen for the person to move away from the type of thought patterns that lead one back to the first drink.

That is something that absolutely tortures the alcoholic and creates even more drinking, because the only thing that can help you get past those feelings of shame and remorse is to get drunk again. It's this terrible cycle that you get caught up in. Unfortunately most alcoholics die drunk.

Every five minutes some well-meaning professional will come up with a clinical model, alcoholism is a shame-based illness, or it revolves around deep childhood trauma, and a lot of these things are actually true. A lot of these therapeutics are actually helpful, but what everyone needs to realize is, the recovery model that has shown the most success for the most people is the recovery model inherent in Alcoholics Anonymous. There, there are certainly lots of success stories and lots of pills and there's lots of courses you can take, and all of those things can be good, but if you really want a sure thing, you best be betting on the twelve-step model.

## There is a Solution 2

The Cape Cod Symposium on Addictive Disorders is an event every year where topics relating to addiction recovery and treatment are studied. They have different presentations and in 2010 one of them was on the efficacy of the twelve-step model in alcoholics and addictions treatment. For a long period of time treatment swung towards the clinical, more psychological, and psychiatric. But there's always been the book of Alcoholics Anonymous, there have always been the twelve-step fellowships and there's always been a huge amount of recovery because of that. We feel that the pendulum is swinging back in the other direction. People who make their livelihoods through the treatment for alcoholism are paying a renewed respect to this process. The fact of the matter is that this is an incredibly valid and efficacious process for recovery from alcoholism and other substance abuse disorders. It's so easy to say, "Oh, that book was written in 1939, they were only a couple of years sober, they weren't professional treatment people..." But they just got so much stuff right.

They recognized immediately that the spirit of the individual needed to be treated. And they got about the business of showing you how you can participate in spiritual healing. That has definitely proven to be monstrously successful across the planet as far as alcoholism recovery is concerned.

It's, the tough thing in modern treatment, balancing the clinical with the spiritual. You have the big book people who say, "All you need is the big book. All you need is to do the program." And then you have the clinical people using every

modern therapeutic technique in their modality. But the really successful treatment centers are the ones that understand both sides of the spectrum and are able to integrate the best of both of those worlds. When you can do this it increases positive outcomes.

There was some really good qualities to Bill. One thing was he received an incredible amount of criticism. Criticism came from the Akron and Cleveland area and some of the other parts of the Midwest in an almost unending stream. And he had a habit of non-response, he wouldn't engage. He wouldn't fight back. Turning the other cheek is basically how he handled that criticism. He rarely would have a harsh word for anyone. So, there's a lot of really, really good qualities that he had. We all fall short in word, thought and deed every single day, and having someone who is not quite the perfect saint as the cofounder of Alcoholics Anonymous and basically the principal author of most of the decent literature, we feel very comfortable with the fact that all good quality's recognized, he was not perfect.

And he was not portraying himself to be this holier than thou individual, more often he would admit his faults openly. God does work in mysterious ways.

Conclusions we have come to so far is, what happens to the body after the first drink...and the text went over time and time again what the phenomenon of craving is, the allergy to alcohol. The allergy is a manifestation of a craving for alcohol. Sometimes it's just such a strong craving, there's practically nothing that's gonna keep the alcoholic from getting more alcohol or drinking more. You'll see someone who's as drunk as they can possibly – they can't even walk – and they're still drinking. What's happening with them is they're suffering from that craving, that allergy to the body, a biological and a mental, full-blown craving for more alcohol. Obviously if when you start drinking, you can't stop until you are unconscious or in jail it's a bad idea for you to start. That leads us into this section of the chapter which talks about the obsession of the mind. If time after time, putting alcohol in our body creates problems for us, why then do we do it, time and time again? In plain layman's terms it lays out exactly what our problem is. And once you truly understand, once you fully concede to your innermost self what that problem is, it doesn't leave you a lot of options.

We would rather have somebody tell us the truth and at least allow us the dignity of dealing with what that truth is, than for somebody to minimize our problem. Sometimes when we talk to people they'll say, "You're not such a bad guy, you just need to not drink as much". That's unhelpful minimization, we're in way more trouble than that if we're alcoholics. We would rather be told the truth, because maybe then we could start to deal with it in a way that it can be dealt with. That's really what these chapters, *There Is A Solution* and *More About Alcoholism* do.

*"These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind rather than in his body."* That's absolutely true. Yes, we've got a physiological problem – our liver and our pancreas throw us into an uncontrollable craving once we ingest alcohol – but the main problem is putting alcohol in our body. The worst decisions we ever made in our life, we did sober. We took the first drink sober. That's the problem...taking the first drink. Everybody wants to say, "Well, I got way too drunk and got a DWI." Well, no. The problem was you took the first drink. And if you're an alcoholic, you need to know that taking the first drink is like taking the twentieth because you don't have enough control to stop.

So the problem centers in our mind, we have an obsession. They call it a type of insanity and if you look at insanity, that's a very good description of the alcoholic going to the liquor store or going up to the bartender and asking for a bottle or a drink. That is insane for an alcoholic to do. No matter what reason you come up with in your mind, it's insufficient compared to the trouble you're likely to get in. S *"If you ask him why he started on that last bender, the chances are he will offer you any one of hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking bout creates. They sound like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beats himself on the head with a hammer so that he can't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, he will laugh it off or become irritated and refuse to talk."* Sometimes a full-blown alcoholic when faced with the absolute truth, it's not something that can register. It can't sink in. If someone says "You should stop drinking", your brain is almost pre-programmed to allow that information to pass right through without sticking. "Well, why did you get so drunk?" That's not a question we really have the ability to deal with, or to answer. So we will come up with a bunch of alibis, she left me, I lost my job, I just couldn't take it, work was really tough today. You'll come up with these crazy reasons, but none of them make any sense compared to what can happen when you start to drink. *"Once in a while, he may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took that first drink than you have. Some drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. There is an obsession that somehow, some day, they will beat the game. But they often suspect that they are down for the count."* Many of us would hope that we could get that warm fuzzy glow and feel larger than life, like we did when we were drinking in high school, but our current state always ends with drinking way past that point. It is almost survival drinking now, very bleak, very grim, scary and lonely. *"How true this is, few realize. In a vague way their families and friends sense that these drinkers are abnormal but everybody hopefully awaits the day when the sufferer will rouse himself from his lethargy and assert his power of will. The tragic truth is that if the man be a real alcoholic, the happy day may not arrive. He has lost control."* Here, this is very important... *"At a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no avail. This tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case before it is suspected."* Now, a lot of people will give us advice like, "Just don't take the first drink." That's good advice for the heavy drinker. However, at a certain point in the drinking of every alcoholic, he passes into a state where the most powerful desire to stop drinking is of absolutely no avail. Making a decision to not drink is not a

defense against it if you're an alcoholic.

The sad part is, this tragic situation has already arrived in practically every case long before it is suspected. We have heard it described like this...the chains of alcoholism are too soft to feel until they are too strong to break. By the time we really, really want to separate from alcohol, we've passed the point of being able to do so just because we want to.

And that, that, in that is the crux of our problem. *"The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."* When they say "in drink", that doesn't mean while they're drinking, it means before they drink and after they drink. In drink, they've lost the power of choice in drink. They've lost the power of choice to not drink and they've lost the power of choice how much they're gonna drink when they start. *"Our so-called willpower becomes practically non-existent. We are unable at certain times to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink."* Another thing that you'll hear people say is, "I just need to keep my memory green and that's all that I need to do." Well, it says here, *"we are unable at certain times to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago."* So all of your past history on how many times you suffered with booze is not a defense against drinking.

We're in a lot of trouble by the time we get to this point. If we're without defense against the first drink and we're without defense on how much we drink, we could easily drink ourselves to death tonight. We don't have the power. The power must manifest from a power greater than ourselves.

*"The almost certain consequences of taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove. The alcoholic may say to himself in the most casual way, "It won't burn me this time, so here's how!" Or perhaps he doesn't think at all. How often have some of us begun to drink in this nonchalant way, and after the third or the fourth, pounded on the bar and said to ourselves, "For God's sake, how did I ever get started again?" Only to have that thought supplanted by, "Well, I'll stop with the sixth drink." Or, "What's the use anyhow?"*

The author can tell a personal story to illustrate where this happened to him. "I put myself through a 28-day treatment program, because alcohol was killing me, not because I had DUIs or the boss was upset. I did this because I was personally concerned with my alcoholism. I put myself in a 28-day program and afterward I was an outpatient. I was going to support group meetings. I was about 85 days sober and on my way to a support group meeting, the thought crosses my mind that, I haven't been drunk in 85 days...I can't even really remember what it's like to be drunk. I bet if I bought a gallon of vodka and drank it, it would really help me. It would remind me how bad it is. It would really help me with all this not drinking stuff. So in effect I bought a gallon of vodka and started drinking it to improve the quality of my sobriety." Now, only an alcoholic could come up with this one, remember he was absolutely serious about not drinking. So how the obsession of the mind had to get in was, to convince him that drinking would help that.

It, it's a mental obsession. And here's what happened...to him next: "I'm just starting my third glass and it dawns on me what a mistake I've made. I've opened up the door to the caged beast and the beast is gonna drag me around by my neck until he's done with me, because I've opened the doors to active drinking again. And I was pounding my desk saying, "I can't believe I was this stupid."

Now here's the thing, was he insane after he was drunk, or was he insane before he was drunk? He made the big mistake sober. He realized what a mistake it was after he started to feel the effects of the vodka. That scared him to death and it led to seven months of the most unbelievably alcoholic drinking he ever experienced in his life. It was unbelievably painful and it was all about buying a gallon of vodka to improve his sobriety. Now, no one in outpatient or anywhere else, had more of a desire to stay separated from alcohol than him, and he drank anyway. *"When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane"*

Many still think that the recovery process is attending meetings. Support group meetings are a way to participate in the atmosphere whereby you can come into contact with a power greater than yourself, learn the recovery work and gain reinforcement to continue to practice the recovery principles. A meeting is not treatment for alcoholism. A meeting is a place where people can fellowship together; the ultimate solution is relationship with God. This is a divine help program; again the twelve-step recovery program is a divine help program. The fellowship is there to support each other and to remind each other on a day to day basis what we need to do to participate in the maintenance of our spiritual condition, what we can do on our own is not enough.

The power has to manifest through us from a power greater than ourselves. This is the message of the big book. There's a lot of people who don't like the message of the big book, or want to water it down or want to change it. Everyone has the ability or the right to do whatever they want to do. There are no iron-clad rules. But this is, this is a suggested program of recovery. It's not a program of suggestions. It's a suggested recovery program. So if you want to try the Alcoholics Anonymous recovery program, this is what you need to do. Otherwise you're doing something else. You've got to be very careful when you take things menu-style.

So the statement "Take what you want and leave the rest" is a damaging thing to say. The reason people say that is because they don't want to drive anybody off. They don't want to scare anybody away. They're afraid that if they give them too much all at once or tell them that this is about God, that they'll leave. The fact of the matter is, if you scare them away with the recovery program or with the hopelessness of their condition, alcohol will scare them back.

Maybe they're not ready to completely give themselves to this simple program, and that's okay too. But let's just assume

for a moment that they are what this book calls a hopeless or real alcoholic. They aren't gonna be able to maintain sobriety out there on their own, no matter what they do. If they've placed themselves beyond human aid, then the only hope is a complete conversion experience, a complete psychic change, a complete rearrangement of personality, like Carl Jung talked about and Bill Wilson discovered in the Oxford Group. If that's what you need, we should be telling people that's what they need instead of saying, "Don't worry...take what you want, leave the rest...easy does it...don't rush things." People say those things because they're afraid of scaring people away. It's better to tell them the truth. Because if they don't stay sober they may think they tried AA when in fact they never did the required recovery work. Now they don't think AA will work when it very well may.

If somebody's dying, we really think that the best thing to do is to tell them the truth. And then to offer them what has really worked for so many people so many times for so many years. *"These stark and ugly facts have been confirmed by legions of alcoholics throughout history. But for the grace of God, there would have been thousands more convincing demonstrations. So many want to stop but cannot. There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching" ...the fourth step..."the leveling of our pride", the fifth and ninth step..."the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation."* That's step 4. *"We saw that it really worked in others and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed."* And that's true for anybody that's had a spiritual awakening as a result of the twelve steps. They'll agree with those sentences. That's, that's what happens to us.

*"The great fact is just this, and nothing less...that we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe."* Another thing that you hear a lot is, don't make any changes in the first year. You need to revolutionize your whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe, in other words, everything. That's the truth of the matter. Candy-coating it is basically saying, easy does it, don't make any changes. You need to make all kinds of changes, if you want to be able to achieve recovery. *"The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way that which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves."* Some of us never believed in an interventional deity. We thought, "Yeah, okay. God's out there but he has no concern about me. He's certainly not manipulating any situations for me. He's not paying attention." And if we had any idea of God, that's the way many of us believed. However when we started to apply these principles and the spiritual steps, we started to see what we took as direct proof of an interventional deity." Things were happening in our life that we could not explain through coincidence, we could not explain in any other way except there's a divine loving presence that's paying attention to what I'm doing and helping us do it. That's the only way we can explain it. It's very difficult when you start talking about God and the manifestation of God because it's such an awesome experience and it's so large and all-encompassing. It doesn't do any justice to use mere human words sometimes.

This is an experience that we have had, the people who have gone through these steps and really tried to work a spiritual program have had experiences of an interventional deity. It's amazing that most of us were agnostic. We were shown through our own experience and experience working with others, that you can access the power of God. It's accessible. *"If you are seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return from human aid, we had but two alternatives. One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness as best we could, the other to accept spiritual help."* Those are your two choices if you're alcoholic, you can blot out of your mind the consciousness of your intolerable situation as best you can, or you can accept spiritual help. And it's funny, the alcoholic will go, "Well, tell me a little bit more about that alcoholic death." That's because they are not as easy as they should be to choose from.

Neither one of those solutions sound really good, only after experiencing recovery does the spiritual help part make a lot of sense.

*"This we did because we honestly wanted to and were willing to make the effort."*

This is Rowland Hazard *"A certain American business man had the ability, good sense and high character. For years he had floundered from one sanitarium to another. He had consulted the best-known American psychiatrists. Then he had gone to Europe, placing himself in the care of a celebrated physician, the psychiatrist Carl Jung, who prescribed for him. Though experience had made him skeptical, he finished his treatment with unusual confidence. His physical and mental condition were unusually good. Above all, he believed he had acquired such a profound knowledge of the inner workings of his mind and its hidden springs that relapse was unthinkable."* If you could have personal counseling time with Carl Jung, it didn't get much better than that. *"Nevertheless, he was drunk in a short time."* He got drunk before he was home. *"More baffling still, he could give himself no satisfactory explanation for his fall."*

*"So he returned to this doctor, whom he admired, and asked him point-blank why he could not recover. He wished above all things to regain self-control. He seemed quite rational and well-balanced with respect to other problems. Yet he had no control whatever over alcohol. Why was this? He begged the doctor to tell him the whole truth and he got it. In the doctor's judgment he was utterly hopeless. He could never regain his position in society and he would have to place himself under lock and key or hire a bodyguard if he expected to live long. That was a great physician's opinion. But this man still lives and he is a free man. He does not need a bodyguard nor is he confined. He can go anywhere on this earth where other free men may go without disaster, providing he remains willing to maintain a certain simple attitude."*

So when the doctor told him the truth that was actually a good thing. He said in rare cases we seen people recover through religious conversion experiences. I would go find an evangelical organization and jump in with both feet, because that's the only time Carl Jung ever saw anybody that alcoholic recover.

*"Some of our alcoholic readers may think that they can do without spiritual help. Let us tell you the rest of the conversation our friend had with his doctor. The doctor said, 'You have the mind of a chronic alcoholic. I have never seen one single case recover, where that state of mind existed to the extent that it does in you.' Our friend felt as though the gates of hell had closed on him with a clang. He said to the doctor, 'Is there no exception?' 'Yes', replied the doctor, 'there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times. Here are there, once in awhile, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. To me, these occurrences are phenomena." Phenomena are things that just happen...you can't really make them happen. "They appear to be in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements. Ideas, emotions and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of these men are suddenly cast to one side and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate them." That's a personality change.*

*"In fact, I've been trying to produce some such emotional rearrangement within you. With many individuals the methods which I employed are successful but I have never been successful with an alcoholic of your description. Upon hearing this, our friend was somewhat relieved, for he reflected that, after all, he was a good church member. This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor's telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience. Here was the terrible dilemma in which our friend found himself when he had the extraordinary experience, which as we have already told you, make him a free man. We, in our turn, sought the same escape with all the desperation of drowning men. What seemed at first a flimsy reed has proved to be the loving and powerful hand of God. A new life has been given us or, if you prefer, a design for living that really works. The distinguished American psychologist, William James, in his book "Varieties of Religious Experience", indicates a multitude of ways in which men have discovered God. We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters. We think it no concern of ours what religious bodies our members identify themselves with as individuals. This should be an entirely personal affair which each one decides for himself in light of past associations, or his present choice. Not all of us join religious bodies, but most of us favor such memberships. In the following chapter, there appears an explanation of alcoholism, as we understand it, then a chapter addressed to the agnostic. Many who once were in this class are now among our members. Surprisingly enough, we find such convictions no great obstacle to a spiritual experience. Further on, clear-cut directions are given, showing how we recovered."*

*Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered. These are followed by forty-two personal experiences. Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God. These give a fair cross section of our membership and a clear-cut idea of what has actually happened in these lives. We hope that no one will consider these self-revealing accounts in bad taste. Our hope is that many alcoholic men and women, desperately in need, will see these pages and we believe that it is only by fully disclosing ourselves and our problems that they will be persuaded to say, "Yes, I am one of them too. I must have this thing."*

If you're not actually applying the spiritual principles of your religion in an active way, you're not going to develop the faith that works for recovery from alcoholism. We have worked with a lot of religious folk. We have been a spiritual advisor to priests. They know way more about theology than we do but they were coming to us to learn how to get a direct relationship with God.

They had been so overburdened with religious dogma and procedures and the business of religion that they lost sight of the prize. And they were coming to us, to learn how to get back to that vital connection to God. We have to grow in awareness, we have to grow spiritually. We have to grow deeper and deeper into our relationship with our creator. There's a lot of ways that people do that. There are a lot of really great religions out there. There's a lot of ways to embellish a spiritual life, however the spiritual principles inherent in this book are, are non-negotiable as far as recovery is concerned. You can broaden and deepen that experience with God in many ways. AA was really not about saving one's soul. It was about saving one's life.

## More About Alcoholism 1

There's so much great information in these chapters and it's truly is amazing that it was put together by Bill Wilson. He was the architect of the information in this book but there was also combined experience by the combined experience of the first members. There were only a couple people who were four years sober. Most of them had less than one year. They were able to put all this information together and it's so valid, even today. It's so incredibly valid.

*"Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics." The author, from personal experience, thought maybe he was an alcoholic, but didn't even understand what an alcoholic was until he was well into some serious step work. Everyone has an idea of an alcoholic. If you ask somebody, "Give me a description of an alcoholic", some people will*

start, "Well, they're the bums on the bowery. They panhandle for money and haven't washed their clothes in two months." And, and some people will say, "That's somebody who drinks way too much and gets drunk a lot." And they'll all have a different description of an alcoholic. What I love about these chapters is they make it very, very clear, it's not how much you drink, it's not how long you drink, it's not the consequences of your drinking, it's more about your relationship in drink. It's more about power, choice and control. It's more about, have you ever really seriously tried to get away from alcohol and found out you couldn't and when you start to drink, can you control the amount every single time? Can you control the amount you take?

That's a real non-judgmental way to paint a picture of alcoholism. Because it's irregardless of a lot of external circumstances, It doesn't really talk about losing everything. It's more about your relationship in drink.

There can be someone who doesn't leave the house much, doesn't really cause any trouble that can be just as alcoholic as the person with ten DWIs. It's more about the relationship in drink than it is about the problems that you have when you drink.

Is it possible that if you were a person who drinks a little but too much on New Year's, that you could have a couple DUIs? Is it possible that you got caught up in an intervention because you got a little bit too drunk at the Christmas party at work and you were asked to seek some help? Is it possible that that could have happened to you and you're not an alcoholic? Absolutely, so the description of alcoholism in this book is valid. Different treatment centers or different clinicians are gonna have a different set of questions for you to answer, but all in all, it's a good idea to go back to this....can you control the amount you take once you start drinking and can you make a decision that's going to last you the rest of your life, to separate from alcohol, and, then have that decision mean something...

If you really are alcoholic, you're gonna find that you can't stay away from it, and you're gonna find that once you start drinking, you're gonna get drunk. You're not just gonna have two and go home usually.

*"No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove we could drink like other people."* The author used to do this all the time, it was not something he wanted to spend a lot of time thinking about, but he knew deep down inside that he was not drinking like the people he was hanging out with, especially early on. It seemed that other people drank as much as they wanted and stopped whenever they wanted. The author just seemed to always end up drunk. Only until he got deeply into this book did he realize what the problem was. He really thought that he was making the choice to get drunk. This is not really the decision someone is going to make, but your mind plays tricks on you. It's very, very difficult to be completely honest with yourself when it concerns your drinking when you're alcoholic.

*"The idea that somehow, some day he would control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death."* There's a period of time when the authors drinking was just an absolute blast and slowly, he crossed the line into really abusive drinking, out of the controlled drinking. And yet he was always hoping to recapture that feeling in the past with the high school parties and other times when it was fun. There weren't any problems and it gave him courage and he had a really good time. He was still trying to achieve that when his drinking had gone so far past that into such chronic and obsessive drinking that there was not gonna be any more for fun for him in drinking. A lot of alcoholics are like overly sentimental. They're holding on to times in the past when things were good. It's part of the illness.

*"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery."* When they list out the steps, they say that you need to admit that you're powerless over alcohol, dash, that your life had become unmanageable. Really, that's the short form, that's the form on the blind at many meetings. The real truth about the first step you find right here in the second paragraph of More about Alcoholism....*"We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."* You need to understand that because when you have slipped into alcoholism, you're not going to ever be able to safely drink again, no matter how long you stay away from alcohol, because once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. If you're around long enough, you're going to hear about every cure in the world. They've got a new pill, there's this new DVD set that will show you how to drink safely, this is a program that will allow an alcoholic to drink safely...if you're a real alcoholic, that's never gonna happen.

There's a lot of hope for the heavy drinker. That's the person who hasn't lost all power, choice and control. They can stop or moderate, if given a good reason or a good therapeutic process or a good medication. They're gonna be able to do it. But the way they describe the alcoholic in this book, science and medicine have not been able to come up with something yet. And it's very dangerous with a lot of these solutions, a lot of these people who want to make money on alcoholics, and who want to come up with like a quick cure. It's very, very dangerous for an alcoholic to try that. The only hope is abstinence for the alcoholic. The only hope is never putting alcohol back in your body ever again, in any form at all, for any reason. And that's going to be their only hope.

Some clinical writings say there is a genetic component. Some say they have not found the alcohol gene. Some people will say they've found sixteen genes that contribute to alcoholism. Gene coding has got a little ways to go before we really have our finger on exactly what's going on genetically. Some think that you can have a predisposition for alcoholism; you have alcoholism and haven't drunk yet. Can you drink so much that you become addicted to alcohol and have to be detoxed? Yes, we believe that that can happen whether you're alcoholic or not.

You put enough alcohol in your body, your body is going to get used to it needing it for certain processes. We have seen a number of people who literally had to be detoxed, but once they were detoxed, and they had the idea that they need to not drink again, didn't. We don't really consider them alcoholic. If they can just say, "I'm never drinking again" and not ever

drink again without spiritual work, we don't consider them alcoholics. They were problem drinkers. And again, a lot of people mistake problem drinkers for alcoholics, and a lot of people mistake alcoholics for problem drinkers. It's necessary for you to understand your own truth and to be able to concede to your innermost self what is going on with you. And you can do that with a lot of information in this book, putting it very honestly up against your personal experience.

*"We alcoholics are men and women who have lost the ability to control our drinking. We know that no alcoholic ever recovers control."* And we believe that to be true. Some people relapse, and they go back out and they have two drinks and they say, "There's no problem here." And the next time they start drinking, they have fifty, and pretty quickly they realize that whatever control they had the night before, they don't have it tonight. The thing is, if there are nights when you don't have control and there are nights when you do have control, you need to ask yourself, am I in control of which nights I have control? If you're not in control of the nights that you can control your drinking, you really don't have any control. *"All of us felt at times that we were regaining control, but such intervals, usually brief, were inevitably followed by still less control, which in time led to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization."*

If after one more relapse or after one more run, you come to and you got the summons in your back pocket for the DUI or you can't remember the last two or three days you become pitifully and incomprehensibly demoralized. You have to ask yourself, would anyone choose that type of struggle for themselves? This is what we believe about the disease or the illness alcoholism. We get caught up in something that's much larger than us. Our ego wants us to accept responsibility for a lot of things that we're not responsible for. Once you start drinking you're not going to be able to say, "Well, I'm going to stop at four." If you really look at this, you're gonna see that there's a real disconnect between what you want to do and what you end up doing. That's a lack of control.

*"We are convinced to a man that alcoholics of our type are in the grip of a progressive illness. Over any considerable period of time, we get worse, we never get better."* Alcoholism gets worse while you're sober. When many people relapse, they can have five years, they can have ten years, they can have twenty years...they don't go back to the drinking that they left off at. They go to where the drinking would be if they continued the progression. Let's say you were drinking a quart of vodka a night when you finally sobered up. And you've been dry for five years. You start drinking again. You don't go back to a quart a night; you go back to a quart and a half a night where you would have been if the progression was allowed to continue. What happens is your liver and pancreas and your body's ability to process that alcohol has continued to deteriorate whether you're drinking or not. Now you have even less power, choice and control than you had when you quit before. A lot of times, it's a lot harder to quit the second time. Ask anybody that's relapsed. I know number of people who said, "It was pretty easy the first time. I went back out and, oh man, am I having a hard time getting back in."

So we think alcoholism gets worse; it doesn't get better, even when you're participating in recovery, the physical part at least. You can really grow spiritually, your quality of life can improve dramatically if you're living a recovery program, but you need to know that you're bodily and mentally different than non-alcoholics and you cannot ever ingest alcohol again safely. So you need to be where you'll be spiritually fit so that doesn't happen.

*"We are like men who have lost their legs, they never grow new ones. Neither does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make alcoholics of our kind like other men."* And there really still isn't, no matter what anybody says. *"We have tried every imaginable remedy. In some instances there has been brief recovery, followed always by a still worse relapse. Physicians who are familiar with alcoholism agree there is no such thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic. Science may one day accomplish this but it hasn't done so yet."* And we don't believe it has yet either. The things that seem to be helpful for people that drank too much don't seem to be helpful for alcoholics. We believe that, those are effective therapeutics or medications for the heavy drinker, the person who's an alcohol abuser, not someone who is dependent on alcohol. Alcoholics have brain receptors and they're going to be preprogrammed to tell you how much you need to drink. And you're going to have very little to say about it. And that's what happens to alcoholics. We think that science may one day accomplish a way to alter these receptors, but it hasn't yet. Also alcoholism is not just a physical problem, it's spiritual as well, if you're just looking at it from the physical, you'll never come up with anything comprehensive for a solution. You're never going to solve the whole issue with a pill, because pills don't necessarily change your perspective. They don't change your thought process. So it's a complicated issue that many people misunderstand. Many clinicians get into it with a misunderstanding because they're only looking at one piece of the puzzle.

It's a complicated endeavor, the only real solution that we've ever seen that works every time is when somebody really participates in is the spiritual one. And that's what this book is about. *"Despite all we can say, many who are real alcoholics are not going to believe that they are in that class. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore non-alcoholic. If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him. Heaven knows, we have tried hard enough and long enough to drink like other people. Here are some of the methods that we have tried...drinking beer only."* We like turning these statements into questions like this; "Have you ever tried drinking beer only?" Yes. "Have you ever tried limiting the number of drinks?" Yes. *"Never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning."* "Do you ever drink in the morning?" Yes. "Have you ever tried to never have it in the house?" yes. *"Never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy."*

*"Drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever, with and without a solemn oath, taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms*

and sanitariums", or rehabs and detoxes. *"Accepting voluntary commitment to asylums.*

*"We could increase the list ad infinitum."* Now, we have to look at this material, have we ever tried to do this or things that are similar.

*"We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself."* Now, one of the things that you don't hear too much in the support groups are these suggestions. There's a suggestion for you to try if you don't think you have the physical craving or the allergy to alcohol. And there's a test that you can perform yourself if you don't think you have the obsession of the mind. These are things that you're not gonna hear suggested at most support group meetings, but they're, valid because it's important for you to know the truth. I think they're valid. It's important to be very careful when you suggest them to people but there are times when they need to know the information. Do you have the allergy of the body and the obsession of the mind? You need to know that so you can take the first step.

Here is the test for the allergy of the body... *"Step over to the nearest bar room and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you decide, if you're honest about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your situation."* So they're more interested in truth than in how much time you have. If you're not sure you have the allergy of the body which is, the first drink asks for the second, the second demands the third, the third insists on the fourth, the fourth screams for the fifth....if you're not sure that you have that, give it a try. Marty Mann, who started the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, many years ago, had a test. She said, "Drink two drinks a day for six months. You can't save them up. And see what happens." If you're really alcoholic, you're probably not gonna make it very long. You're going to say something like this, "Well, this is the third day I'm doing this and I think this test is pretty crazy. And I think I passed and I think I'll celebrate", or some crazy thought like that. But if you can't just drink two drinks a day for six months, if something interrupts that test, you're probably alcoholic.

Most alcoholics have achieved a certain level of craving. Some people can pass this test but may be an alcohol abuser or a heavy drinker, but we don't think too many alcoholics are going to get through that. What happens is, your body just screams for more alcohol and you're gonna come up with a reason to put more in. There's a real lack of control. *"Though there is no way to prove it, we believe that early in our drinking careers most of us could have stopped drinking. But the difficulty is that few alcoholics have enough desire to stop while there is yet time. We've heard of a few instances where people, who showed definite signs of alcoholism, were able to stop for a long period of time because of an overpowering desire to do so."* There's the man of thirty, there's Fred, there's Jim, and they're all stories that are designed to show you what powerlessness looks like. How does powerlessness present in alcoholism.

*"A man of thirty was doing a great deal of spree drinking. He was very nervous in the morning after these bouts and quieted himself with more liquor. He was ambitious to succeed in business, but saw that he would get nowhere if he drank at all. Once he started, he had no control whatever. He made up his mind that until he had been successful in business and had retired, he would not touch another drop. An exceptional man, he remained bone-dry for twenty-five years and retired at the age of 55, after a successful and happy business career. Then he fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has, that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a bottle. In two months, he was in a hospital, puzzled and humiliated. He tried to regulate his drinking for awhile, making several trips to the hospital meantime. Then gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found he could not. Every means of solving the problem which money could buy was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man at retirement, he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years."* So he didn't just go back to drinking where he left off. He was dead in four years.

This happens to so many alcoholics. Sometimes they can remain dry, but once they start drinking again, it's very, very difficult to separate again. *"This case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. But here is a man who at 55 years found he was just where he left off at thirty."* He was actually much worse off. *"We have seen this truth demonstrated again and again. Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. Commencing to drink after a long period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that some day we will be immune to alcohol."* A lot of people in different support groups believe we quit drinking a day at a time. That's a complete misunderstanding of the day at a time slogan. The day at a time slogan means we live life a day at a time. We try not to get too involved in worrying about the future or regretting the past, so we try to live in the now. That's a great spiritual way to live, but as far as our understanding about alcohol and what we can do with it... *"If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind nor any lurking notion that some day we will be immune to alcohol."* If you have that notion, that notion could sabotage your recovery. It could quietly erode your will to do the things that you need to do to stay sober. So it's a really good idea to get as close to your first step truth as you can. And when you truly fully conceded to your innermost self that you're an alcoholic, that concession means, "I can't drink any more. I need to do whatever I can possibly do to place myself in the position where God can keep me safe and protected because alcohol can't go in my body any more." "I'll never be able to drink again."

*"Young people may be encouraged by this man's experience to stop as he did on their own willpower. We doubt if many of them can do it, because none will really want to stop and hardly one of them, because of the peculiar mental twist already acquired, will find he can win out."* The peculiar mental twist is the obsession of the mind. That's the inability to make a decision to never drink again and have that mean anything. The time and the place is gonna come and that resolve will be out the window, and alcohol will be down your throat. That's just the experience that alcoholics have. Many of us have said, "I'm never drinking again. I promise, I promise. I'll sign my name in the Bible. I really promise this

time. This time I really mean it. This time I really understand and I really mean it.” And those thoughts don’t matter, if you don’t have a fundamental spiritual experience, it’s not gonna matter that you don’t want to drink. If you’re alcoholic, you’re going to drink without a vital spiritual experience.

*“Several of our crowd, many of thirty or less, had been drinking only a few years but have found themselves as helpless as those who had been drinking twenty years.”* So it doesn’t matter how long you drink, it’s the powerlessness. How powerless are you. *“To be gravely affected, one does not necessarily have to drink a long time nor take the quantities some of us have. This is particularly true of women. Potential female alcoholics often turn into the real thing and are gone beyond recall in a few years. Certain drinkers, who would be greatly insulted if called alcoholics, are astonished at their inability to stop. We, who are familiar with the symptoms, see large numbers of potential alcoholics among young people everywhere. But try to get them to see it.”*

*“As we look back, we feel we had gone on drinking many years beyond the point where we could quit on our own willpower.”* That’s a problem because by the time the obsession of the mind is strong enough to keep you drinking, you’re starting to really try to get away from it. So you’re not even going to want to stop drinking before you’re too far to gone to be able to. The chains of alcoholism are too light to feel until they are too strong to break.

This is the test for the obsession of the mind? Can I just not drink on my own willpower, without going to the support groups, without doing these twelve steps, without turning my will over to God, can I just quit on my own? This is the test that you take if you think you can do that. *“If anyone questions whether he has entered this dangerous area, let him try leaving liquor alone for one year.”* Don’t go to meetings, don’t get a counselor, don’t read self-help books. Just don’t drink. If you’re an alcoholic, you’re probably not gonna last a year. I’m not saying that you can’t, but you probably won’t. You’re gonna come to the conclusion that, *“This is really a stupid test. You’ll change your mind somehow and you’ll end up drinking. So, this is how you can tell whether or not the obsession of the mind is operative in your case. “If he is a real alcoholic and very far advanced, there is scant chance of success. In the early days of our drinking, we occasionally remained sober for a year or more, becoming serious drinkers again later. Though you may be able to stop for a considerable period, you may yet be a potential alcoholic*

*“We think few to whom this book will appeal can stay dry anything like a year. Some of them will be drunk the day after making their resolutions, most of them within a few weeks.”* “For those who are unable to drink moderately, the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop.”

This book is about how do you stop but it’s also about how do you not start again. The craziest thing we ever do, the stupidest decision we ever make is putting alcohol in our body one more time. *“Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power of choice whether he will drink or not.”* This is interesting. Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual base, depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power of choice, whether he will drink or not. If you haven’t gone down the scale far enough and you really can stay dry a year on your own you haven’t gone down the scale as far as most of the people that were putting this book together. But, if you have lost that power to choose when you’re gonna put alcohol back in your body, you cannot quit unless it’s on a spiritual basis, is one of the important statements this book is making.

*“Many of us felt that we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism, this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or wish.”* “How then shall we help our readers to determine to their own satisfaction whether they are one of us? The experiment of quitting for a period of time will be helpful, but we think we can render an even greater service to alcoholic sufferers and perhaps to the medical fraternity. So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking, for obviously this is the crux of the problem.”

The problem is every time you got drunk, you did it sober. So obviously the problem lies in the mind, you’re making the bad decisions sober. *“What sort of thinking dominates the alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? Friends who have reasoned with him after a spree which has brought him to the point of divorce or bankruptcy are mystified when he walks directly into a saloon. Why does he? Of what is he thinking? Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. This man has a charming wife and family. He inherited a lucrative automobile agency. He had a commendable World War record. He is a good salesman. He is an intelligent man, normal so far as we can see, except for a nervous disposition.”*

*“He did no drinking until he was thirty-five. In a few years, he became so violent when intoxicated that he had to be committed. On leaving the asylum he came into contact with us. We told him what we knew of alcoholism and the answer we had found. He made a beginning.”* “His family was reassembled and he began to work as a salesman for the business he had lost through his drinking.” “All went well for a time but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.” This means he didn’t go through the steps.

*“To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession. On each of these occasions we worked with him reviewing carefully what had happened. He agreed that he was a real alcoholic and in a serious condition. He knew he faced another trip to the asylum if he kept on. Moreover, he would lose his family for whom he had a deep affection. Yet he got drunk again. We asked him to tell us exactly how it happened. This is his story. ‘I came to work on Tuesday morning.’”* We love that, Tuesday instead of Monday.

*“I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned. I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. Then I decided to drive into the country and see one of my prospects for a car.”* That’s how they sold cars back then; they actually drove them around and showed them to people. *“On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a*

roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich. I also had the notion that I might find a customer for a car at this place, which was familiar, for I had been going to it for years. I had eaten there many times during the months I was sober. I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking, I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.” There’s a lot of tools that you find in treatment, and you hear them in support groups that are good tools. But this guy didn’t want to drink. He wasn’t thinking about drinking. He wasn’t planning this drunk. A lot of people think, “You plan your relapse long before you take it.” It’s not like he was hungry, lonely, angry or tired.

”Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk, it couldn’t hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into my milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart but felt reassured that I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach.” This guy had been to the asylum six or seven times. He vaguely sensed that putting alcohol in his body was not a good idea. He goes to the asylum every time he drinks. This is that strange mental twist, the strange mental blank spot that precedes the first drink. It does not allow rational thought, you don’t have time to call your sponsor, or get to a meeting, or make coffee. When “suddenly” hits you’re in trouble. “Suddenly” is a manifestation of the mental obsession and when “suddenly” hits, you’re putting whiskey in milk, vaguely sensing that it’s not a good idea.

By the time you’re at the bar, you’ve already let your spiritual condition drop to such a point, that you’re powerless anyway. There’s nothing that’s going to keep you from drinking. There’s things that you can participate in to protect yourself against the obsession of the mind. But there’s nothing that you can do about it when it hits. You can participate in a spiritual life. You can broaden and deepen your relationship with God. You can make amends, you can work with others. Those are all things that you can do to participate in your recovery. And they can grant you immunity from drinking, as long as there’s a right relationship with God.

But if you’ve sat down at the bar and all of a sudden you start to get a craving, that mental obsession for booze it’s already too late by that time.

”The experiment went well.” He, he had a whiskey and a milk and nothing bad happened. “It went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn’t seem to bother me so I tried another.” “Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim.” How many times has that happened to us? You don’t walk across the street to a bar and say, “Bartender, I’m about to order a whiskey, but before I do that, I’d like to tell you about the last time I drank. The last time I drank, my family left me, I drank for four weeks straight, I ended up in the emergency room. I was fifty pounds underweight; they put me in a detox and a rehab for ninety days. I came out, I’ve been struggling, going to meetings and working with people and, slowly over the course of the last fifteen years, I’ve put my life back together to such a point that it’s bearable today and there’s actually some joy in it. And I’m about to order a whiskey so that I can go right back to where I was the day I checked myself into the rehab. Could I have a double?” You don’t drink on the truth like that. You can’t keep your memory green like that, unless you’re spiritually fit.

The humor here is, when he says the experiment went so well... “Then I ordered another whiskey.” Well, if it went so well, he wouldn’t have ordered the other whiskey. It’s absolutely, absolutely crazy, he wasn’t even there for that decision. And, if you really ask an alcoholic the next time why they drank, if they’re being honest with you, the answer’s gonna be, “I don’t know.” You drink from a place of sanity because no one of sound mind is gonna make the decision to put alcohol back in their body if they’re an alcoholic. You make it from an insane state of mind. An insane state of mind means you’re not even really there. To get deep into the first step like this, to really start to look at how alcoholism presents and a first step picture of alcoholism, you will see that it really paints a bleak picture. You cannot get done with your first step concession and be happy about it.

If you’re really seen the first step, you really see how much trouble you’re in. You’re not even going to be there when you drink the next time. And once you start, you could drink continuously for two years until you die just like the man of thirty. “Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking had always caused him. He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic.” Remember, he had been working with Bill and the boys and he had been in the asylum six or eight times. “Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk. Whatever the precise definition of this word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else”? That really is a picture of the mental obsession, knowing that it’s a bad idea to put alcohol in your body but doing it anyway. This is a really bad idea. Could I have another one?

It just doesn’t make any sense. If you follow the root definition of insanity, you’ll find that it’s more of a legal term than it is a medical term. It was basically developed to protect people who, who really didn’t have the access to sane judgment where it concerned right or wrong, or breaking the law or not. The insanity defense was, we can’t find someone guilty of something they’re not able to even understand. It’s not like ignorance of the law; it’s not being capable of judgment from right and wrong.

We’re insane prior to drinking and that’s a good description of it. Because we don’t have access to right and wrong, to good and bad, we’re not capable of making that decision.

## More About Alcoholism 2

Bill Wilson uses various examples in this book to show from experience the point he wants to make. The point he is

making with Jim is, *"He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could drink whiskey if he mixed it with milk."*

One of the most difficult things to understand in addiction or alcoholism is the concept of powerlessness. If you've never experienced powerlessness yourself it's gonna be very, very difficult for you to even believe it exists. This is why so many people say, "Why don't they just stop drinking?"

The problem is, is, there are periods of insanity. Bill Wilson wasn't a psychiatrist, he wasn't a doctor, he did the best he could with the concepts that were available to him. He calls it insanity and it really is. Insanity is not being able to have access to sound reasoning and judgment and certainly that happens with alcoholics. Most alcoholics at periods of time in their life have made a real attempt at separating from alcohol. Who would want to wake up violently ill very morning and crash cars that night, and wake up violently ill that morning, and lose their family that night? Nobody's going to make rational decisions to do that time and time again. There has to be something at work in the alcoholic that's difficult to understand. And that thing is the obsession of the mind. It's part of one's powerlessness. *"Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight be called anything else?" "You may think this is an extreme case. To is it is not far-fetched, for this kind of thinking has been characteristic of every single one of us."*

The thinking mind goes through a process that allows alcohol to be put back in the body. If you were, if you were to sit down and do a list of pros and cons, okay, if I drink, I'll feel a little better right now but I'll lose my family, job and my home. If you had access to that type of thinking, of course you wouldn't drink. But that's not what happens. The kind of thing that happens is where there's a strange mental blank spot or a subtle form of insanity that precedes the first drink that allows us to put alcohol back in our body. It sometimes convinces us it's a good idea. *"We have sometimes reflected more than Jim did upon the consequences. But there was always the curious mental phenomenon that parallel with our sound reasoning there inevitably ran some insanely trivial excuse for taking the first drink. Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The insane idea won out. Next day we would ask ourselves, in all earnestness and sincerity, how it could have happened."* One of the things that a lot of people try to help you with, even people who are advising you, maybe they are your spiritual advisor or sponsor, is they advise you to just think through the drink, or to keep your memory green. Just don't take a drink, no matter what. The problem is those are ineffective as a defense against the first drink if you are a real alcoholic. They're helpful for the alcohol abuser. They're not helpful for the person who's alcohol-dependent.

Those, those types of defenses against the first are just not going to work. What a typical day would look like for the author is in the late 80s. I would come to in the morning just feeling absolutely awful, in the clothes that I went to bed in the night before. If I was on the floor, I'd get up. The alarm would be ringing because I'd need to go to work. Let's say it was a Tuesday or something. And I'd have to be at work at eight so the alarm would go off at 7:30 and I'd stagger up, almost delirious. I'd, get into the bathroom. I'd do my vomiting calisthenics. I'd brush my teeth, I'd comb my hair and go out, get in the car and drive to work. There would be so much alcohol coming out of my pores, that if I got pulled over, I'd have gotten a DUI but I hadn't had a drink since about eight o'clock the night before. So I had almost twelve hours in between my last drink to when I was driving, but I polluted myself so much with vodka or bourbon that it would be coming out of my pores. And I would be swearing, "I am never ever gonna drink again. I never want to feel this bad." I'm shaking. I have high levels of anxiety. I'm nauseous, just in total pain.

It's like having a, a mega flu or something. And I would swear that today is the day. Today is the day I am not gonna drink again. And I'd get to work, and I was discombobulated. I couldn't deal, it was very difficult for me to take the assignment and get on the road with it. But I would and that whole morning, I'd be convinced that I'm never gonna drink again. Now if you were to put a lie detector on me at that point in time, the polygraph expert would say, "This guy's telling the truth. He's never gonna drink again. You can bet money on it." Because I really meant it. Now sometime around noon, I'd get half a sandwich down, I'd be rehydrated and I'd start to feel a little bit human. And about one or two o'clock, I'd start to realize that that decision I made to never drink again, that's a pretty serious decision. I need to think about this a little bit. This might be an overreaction to a problem I think I can handle. And by the time I'm heading home from work, I've convinced myself to stop at the liquor store to buy another, another quart of vodka, or another quart of bourbon and get totally polluted that night.

This was a cycle that I couldn't get out of, the only way I can describe it...it isn't a lack of willpower. It isn't changing my mind. I couldn't have changed my mind from the morning to the afternoon. What I recognize today was that this was one of the subtle forms of insanity that has to happen in your thinking mind to allow you to drive to the liquor store and put more alcohol in your body. Your body needs more alcohol. Your spirit needs more alcohol. It doesn't care what it needs to do to convince you to do it. So that's the tricky part of alcoholism and that's the part that most non-alcoholics don't understand. They don't understand that the alcoholic is caught up in something that's much bigger and much stronger than they are. A firm resolution to never drink again is a fine thing and it may even last a period of time. You may even be able to get a couple weeks, months or years out of it. But if you've crossed the line into alcoholism, the time and the place is gonna come and you're gonna put alcohol back in your body.

And Bill is trying to explain this to us with one story after another, examining someone's experience with powerlessness. Because this is the crux of the problem, this is what's going to convince us we're in real trouble. If we place ourselves in the same category as the people he's talking about, there's nothing we can do on our own unaided will to stop drinking. He's gonna talk about how they got out of this and there was a whole bunch of people that did recover. . *"In some circumstances, we have gone out deliberately to get drunk feeling ourselves justified by nervousness, anger, worry,*

*depression, jealousy or the like. But even in this type of beginning, we are obliged to admit that our justification for a spree was insanely insufficient in the light of what always happened."*

It's not like we say "The boss was upset with me today. I'm gonna get even by making myself ill and getting to a point where I have alcohol poisoning. If you really look at the decision to go out and have a few with the boys, and you're alcoholic, it's an insanely insufficient justification. *"We now see that when we began to drink deliberately instead of casually, there was little serious or effective thought during the period of premeditation of what the terrific consequences might be."* MM: Mm-hmm.

Let's look at the jay-walker story. We're not a jay-walker. We don't jump in front of cars to get a rush. So we may not fully understand it. So we think the guy's a nut, but that's the way people see alcoholics. They're not alcoholic drinkers so they think we're nuts or we're morally defective.

This is the jay-walker. *"Our behavior is absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jay-walking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point you would label him as a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital, a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He tells you he has decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks he breaks both legs. On through the years, this conduct continues, accompanied by his continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally he can no longer work, his wife gets a divorce and he is held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jay-walking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But he day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he? You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language by it's true."* I want, I love taking, taking the knowledge or the examples out of this book and turning them into my

If we can relate these stories and principles to something out of our own experience, we can then own them. This is the story the author will tell when talking about his own insanity with alcohol. When I was in seventh grade, a young little kid full of spunk and I'd get in a little bit of trouble here and there. I was kind of a loner. But one of the things I liked to do, in the hallway of this school were lockers and the lockers had combinations right on the doors. And what you would do is if you saw one of your friends, you'd sneak up behind them and you'd slam their locker shut when they were getting their books out. And, you'd get them, and then they'd have to stop and go through the whole combination again to open up their locker. And meanwhile you're laughing, running down the hall. Now one of the people I use to do this with was, was named Huey. And Huey was a big guy; he was probably 180 pounds in seventh grade. I would slam Huey's locker shut every once in awhile, just, just as a prank. And this one day I did it and I think Huey was probably having a bad day. Because what he did was he turned around, he grabbed me by the shoulders and he started slapping my head up against the wall. I'm ninety pounds. He's like 180. And you know what they make walls of in school buildings, cement. So he knocked me unconscious. I literally came to, lying on the floor, and classes had started. I was alone in the hall. And I had to get up and stagger to geometry or whatever the heck it was, just dazed out of my mind. He concussed me. Now, I gotta tell you, I never ever slammed Huey's locker shut after that day. If I saw Huey in the hallway when I was walking down and he was at his locker, I would walk on the other side of the hall, just in case somebody slammed his locker shut and he turned around and he saw me. And, no matter how much fun I got out of slamming his locker shut, I never ever did it again. I had an adequate mental defense against slamming Huey's locker shut. I never had an adequate mental defense against picking up the first drink. It would have been like me slamming his locker shut and getting knocked unconscious every day. Because that's what alcohol did to me. Alcohol knocked me unconscious every day. But I kept slamming the locker door shut. I didn't have access to that sound reasoning.

It's the obsession of the mind. We don't know what mental processes are involved in this and we're not sure what research has been done. But an obsession is a thought that overrides all other thought systems. If you're obsessed with something, you can't get away from it.

An expert on gambling was telling us this one time that people go to the casinos, and they're on a slot machine and they actually wear a catheter so that they don't have to go to the bathroom. They're so obsessed with running that machine, that they'll stay there for a 24-hour period of time never getting out of that seat and they'll put a catheter in so that they don't urinate in their pants. There are kids that parents are finding who have died playing a video game. They've just wasted away playing video games. Those are obsessions that are mental thought constructs that override everything else and why they happen we really don't know, but once you start to suffer from them, you need some serious help to overcome it. It's not something where you can just say, "Well, it's not a good idea for me to drink." If you can do that, you're not alcoholic.

The people who can say, "I'll never drink again" and never drink again are almost always non-alcoholics. One of the symptoms of alcoholism is the obsession of the mind or the relapse. An obsession of the mind, the way the book puts it, means you're going drinking. The only thing that's gonna stop you is availability, if you can't find it. So if you get the obsession of the mind, you're drinking. It's already too late. You're done. There are people who are preoccupied with thoughts of drinking, that's not the same thing.

You may hear in a meeting, somebody says, "I've had an obsession to drink" or "my obsession to drink hasn't been lifted in six months". They're using the wrong term. Because if they had the obsession, they would never have it for six

months, if they had it for five minutes, they'd be driving to the liquor store. So we are using the definitions that are in this book. Whether or not it's the current psychological definition or not...

Until you have the preoccupation lifted, you're going to be thinking about alcohol a lot. Someone who has recovered will understand that alcohol can temporarily solve problems, but they have been restored to sanity. It doesn't go into obsession and they don't pick it up.

*"Some of you are thinking, 'Yes, what you tell us is true, but it doesn't fully apply. We admit we have some of these symptoms, but we have not gone to the extremes you fellows did, nor are we likely to, for we understand ourselves so well after what you have told us that such things cannot happen again. We have not lost everything in life through drinking and we certainly do not intend to. Thanks for the information."* Now what happens when working with people lot is, people think that the information is power. The problem is that you're trying to use your mind that suffers from insanity to solve the problem. You can't solve the problem with the problem, with a broken tool.

So if all you have is information on alcoholism and you know everything there is to know about it, that's not a defense. Here is the story of someone we knew, he left America in the early 70s to avoid the Vietnam War. He ended up in Canada and lived there for about twenty years. What happened in that period of time was he got sober, got involved in recovery, got involved in becoming a recovery counselor and worked his way up to a very high level position in the government in the alcoholism bureau Canada has. He was a very high level officer in the government dealing with alcoholism and drug addiction. And what happened was, he relapsed. Now he knew as much as you could possibly know about alcoholism and about treatment and about drug addiction and about drug treatment. He was one of the experts and he ended up getting drunk. So knowledge is not gonna protect you.

A very prominent addictions expert, who worked in the field almost 50 years told is "Four out of five alcoholics in recovery that become alcoholism counselors relapse while they're counseling for alcoholism? We would think that if all day long, all you're doing is treating for alcoholism, that's gonna mean something as far as a defense against drinking. But it obviously doesn't. So self-knowledge is not the key. So a lot of people say, "Okay, great. Thanks. I understand. I can never drink again. Thank you."

Well, they don't get the part, that you can never drink again. If you stayed abstinent the rest of your life, that's a good goal, but you can't. This book is always talking about the real alcoholic, the chronic alcoholic or the alcohol-dependent individual, someone that's gone down the scale pretty far. *"That may be true of certain non-alcoholic people who, though drinking foolishly and heavily at the present time, are able to stop or moderate, because their brains and bodies have not been damaged as ours were. But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge. This is a point we wish to emphasize and reemphasize, to smash home upon our alcoholic readers as it has been revealed to us out of bitter experience. Let us take another illustration."* Bill knows how difficult a concept this is to grasp. Many people in support groups don't even grasp this.

By observing in meetings you will be able to see that somewhere around eighty percent of the people in all of the twelve step support groups don't understand this because it's so difficult to internalize. Who wants to admit their completely defeated and are not gonna be able to protect themselves against the next drink. That's scary.

The alcoholic is absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge. So everything you learn is good if you turn what you learn into a recovery experience. It's more about doing than thinking. You can't think yourself sober. You have to act yourself sober. There are certain instructions in this book and it's behavioral. And if you take these behavioral instructions, and spiritual exercises, it leads to a place called recovered, where you can be safe and protected from the next drink or the next drug. But if all you're doing is gathering information, you're in big trouble.

This is the story of Fred. *"Fred is a partner in a well known accounting firm. His income is good. He has a fine home, is happily married and the father of promising children of college age. He has so attractive a personality that he makes friends with everyone. If ever there was a successful business man, it is Fred. To all appearance, he is a stable, well balanced individual. Yet he is an alcoholic. We first saw Fred about a year ago in a hospital where he had gone to recover from a bad case of the jitters. It was his first experience of this kind and he was much ashamed of it."* The sad thing is detoxes get easier sometimes the more you go. If it becomes habitual it gets easier sometimes to deal with the shame. *"Far from admitting he was an alcoholic, he told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves. The doctor intimated strongly that he might be worse than he realized. For a few days he was depressed about his condition. He made up his mind to quit drinking altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could not do so, in spite of his character and standing. Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic; much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problem."* Unfortunately that's about eighty percent of the people who first attempt treatment.

*"We told him what we knew about alcoholism. He was interested and conceded that he had some of these symptoms but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself. He was positive that this humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it. We heard no more of Fred for awhile. One day we were told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see us. The story he told is most instructive, for here was a chap absolutely convinced he had to stop drinking, who had no excuse for drinking, who exhibited splendid judgment and determination in all his other concerns, yet was flat on his back nevertheless. Let him tell you about it. 'I was much impressed with what you fellows said about alcoholism, and I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again. I rather appreciated your idea about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned. I reasoned I was not so far advanced as most of you fellows, that I had been unusually successful in licking my other personal problems and that I would therefore be successful where you men failed. I felt I*

had every right to be self-confident, that it would only be a matter of exercising my willpower and keeping on guard.” Fred talks about feeling like he’s not as far advanced, remember these guys would do twelve step calls in the hospital. Being in a hospital should show some sense of urgency to one’s condition, but many times the patient is less concerned than they need to be.

One of the things they taught him about was the subtle form of insanity that would precede the first drink. That’s an important thing to understand if you’re going to do twelve step calls. You need to explain that. That’s what they did in the old days and that’s how they got these people hooked into the twelve step program. *“In this frame of mind I went about my business and for a time, all was well, I had no trouble refusing drinks, and began to wonder if I had not been making too hard work of a simple matter. One day I went to Washington to present some accounting evidence to a government bureau. I had been out of town before during this particular dry spell so there was nothing new about that. Physically I felt fine. Neither did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business came off well; I was pleased and knew my partners would be too. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon.”* There’s a lot of very well-meaning people that say a lot of things that seem to make a lot of sense. One of them is being hungry, angry, lonely; tired are conditions that can lead to relapse.

Fred felt fine physically, he didn’t have any problems or worries. He was pleased. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon. Was he hungry, angry, lonely or tired? Hungry, angry, lonely or tired is, is not a good place to be. But not being hungry, angry, lonely or tired is not a defense against the next drink. *“I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind that it would be fine to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more.”* Think about this. He’s been in the hospital; he’s ashamed of what happened to him. He had to go in to be detoxed. The jitters were basically delirium tremens. It’s a very dangerous physical and mental place to be.

It’s an awful form of suffering and this happened to him twice already. And as he crosses the threshold of the dining room, he decides that he’ll have a couple of cocktails. Where’s the defense, where’s the sound reasoning? He didn’t have access to it. *“I ordered a cocktail and my meal. Then I ordered another cocktail. After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel, it struck me that a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night, and plenty the next morning. I have a shadowy recollection of being in an airplane bound for New York and of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field instead of my wife. The driver escorted me about for several days.”*

He talked the taxi driver into partying with him for a couple days. *“I know little of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with the unbearable mental and physical suffering. As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink.”* So much for the direction many hear in support groups to don’t take a drink no matter what, even if your butt falls off. Sometimes you don’t even have any fight. Sometimes suddenly the thought crosses your mind. And when “suddenly” comes, you’re done. The obsession hits you and you’re drinking. *“This time I had not thought of the consequences at all. I had commenced to drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale. I now remembered what my alcoholic friends had told me, how they prophesied that if I had an alcoholic mind, the time and place would come. I would drink again. They had said that though I did raise a defense, it would one day give way before some trivial reason for having a drink.”* Because that’s what happens to alcoholics, a trivial reason or no reason at all. How do you protect yourself from no reason at all?

*“Well, just that did happen and more, for what I had learned of alcoholism did not occur to me at all. I knew from that moment that I had an alcoholic mind. I saw that willpower and self-knowledge would not help in those strange mental blank spots. I had never been able to understand people who said that a problem had them hopelessly defeated. I knew then. It was a crushing blow.”* There’s a great line in the Twelve and Twelve, in step one. It says, “Who among us wishes to admit complete defeat? Glass in hand we’ve warped our mind to such a state that only an act of divine providence can relieve us of this obsession.”

That is one of the most powerful sentences Bill Wilson ever put together. Because who among us wants to be this defeated? Who among us wants to be this powerless? And our thinking mind will try to convince us in many ways that this is not true for us. We’re different, we can handle this and we’ll then fall short on our recovery processes. We’ll slowly stop participating in our recovery processes and the time and the place will come and that mental obsession will return. This is why the relapse rate is so high in alcoholism. People will say, “Well, the first thing I did was I stopped going to meetings.” Because you did not participate in recovery actions or decreased their frequency what really happens is, “You stopped going to meetings long before you stopped going to meetings.”

Sometimes it’s slow, sometimes it’s fast, but it’s backing away from the spiritual intensity that’s needed to maintain the spiritual condition so that God can keep you safe and protected. It’s a hard concept to understand. A lot of people don’t like to hear that it’s God who holds the power to stay sober. If you’re really alcoholic, if you’re relapsing a lot, if you’ve been going to twelve step groups, if you’ve been in and out of rehabs and detoxes and you really want to get over it, this is the work you have to do. If you do this, you will recover. These guys were low-bottom, horrible, terrible alcoholics. They’re the type of alcoholics where, they were put in insane asylums. For years they were in and out of insane asylums.

*“Two of the members of Alcoholics Anonymous came to see me. They grinned, which I didn’t like so much, and then asked me if I thought myself an alcoholic and if I were really licked this time. I had to concede both propositions. They piled on me heaps of evidence to the effect that an alcoholic mentality, such as I had exhibited in Washington, was a hopeless condition. They cited cases out of their own experience by the dozen. This process snuffed out the last flicker*

*of conviction that I could do the job myself.”* And if you’re doing a good twelve step call, that’s what you need to try to do. You need to sniff out the last flicker of any individual’s thought that they can handle alcohol or quitting alcohol on their own. *“Then they outlined the spiritual answer”,* the twelve steps, the program of action which a hundred of them had followed successfully. *“Though I had only been a nominal church man, their proposals were not intellectually hard to swallow. But the program of action, though entirely sensible, was pretty drastic.”* *“It meant I would have to throw several lifelong conceptions out the window. That was not easy. But the moment I made up my mind to go through the process, I had the curious feeling that my alcoholic condition was relieved, as in fact it proved to be.”* When he made his third step decision to seek God and go through the rest of the steps, he started to feel like his alcoholic condition was removed. We don’t know whether it was removed but he certainly stayed sober long enough to get through the program of action. *“Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.”* Let’s read this again. *“Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.”* Not just your alcoholism, but all your problems will be solved, that is a powerful promise.

*“I have since been brought into a way of living infinitely more satisfying and I hope, more useful than the life I lived before. My old manner of life was by no means a bad one, but I would not exchange its best moments for the worst I have now. I would not go back to it even if I could.”* Fred’s story speaks for itself. *We hope it strikes home to thousands like him. He had felt only the first nip of the wringer.”* Some of these guys were so bad; they think he only felt the nip of the wringer. Most of the people that were coming into their group at that time were much worse than Fred. But his guy was hospitalized with delirium tremens, that’s pretty bad we believe. *“Most alcoholics have to be pretty badly mangled before they really commence to solve their problems. Many doctors and psychiatrists agree with our conclusions. One of these men, staff member of a world-renowned hospital, recently made this statement: ‘When you say about the average alcoholic’s plight is in my opinion correct. As to two of you men whose stories I have heard, there is no doubt in my mind that you are one hundred percent hopeless. Apart from divine help, had you offered yourselves as patients at this hospital, I would not have taken you, if I had been able to avoid it. People like you are too heart-breaking. Though not a religious person, I have profound respect for the spiritual approach in such cases as yours. For most cases, there is virtually no solution. No other solution but divine help.’ Once more, the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. This defense must come from a higher power.”*

Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense.” Human power is not gonna provide a defense. What, what are some human powers? Sponsors, Groups, Counselors, Family members, you could easily add to this list. *“His defense must come from a higher power.”* Even big book studies like this are a waste of time if you’re an alcoholic, unless you take the information that they’re giving you and follow the exercises and turn it into your own personal experience. That’s what recovery is about, gaining access to a power greater than themselves that can accomplish what the sufferer cannot.

Many people go to big book studies these days because they like to learn. They like to hear a solution and it can be fun. Not everyone that goes to those studies actually does what’s being talked about. When you actually do the things that are being talked about in this book, you get an experience. And the experience has been shown time and time again to produce a certain result. And the result is recovery. Now so many people are scientific. God is such an unfathomable concept to them. They just can’t wrap their hands around it. Here’s what you do if you’re one of these people. You go through this book like it’s a textbook and you turn every statement into a question to find out if it’s something you can relate to from your own experience. You follow every exercise and you do every instruction to the best of your ability and keep a notebook on it and take notes about the results. If you do you will find out something very remarkable. You’re going to find that you’re going to get the results inherent in recovery that you probably didn’t think you were going to get.

Another thing that you hear a lot is, take what you want and leave the rest. This is not a program of suggestions. This is a suggested program. So if you’re going to accept the program, you need to accept the whole program, all of the instructions. If you take what you want and you leave the rest, you’re gonna be in trouble. Let’s say you go over to a friend’s house and they serve chocolate cake for dessert. It’s the absolute best chocolate cake you’ve ever tasted in your life. It’s unbelievable. And you say, “Please, please, can I have the recipe for that cake?” And they reluctantly give you that recipe. The next weekend you’re gonna bake one of those cakes. You remember how great it was and you pull out the instructions and it says that you need to use baker’s chocolate. You don’t have baker’s chocolate but you’ve got a couple of Hershey bars so you throw that in. Then you’re supposed to use a certain type of refined brown sugar. You don’t have brown sugar so you use regular sugar. And then it calls for a special flour and you don’t have that but you have another kind of flour. When you bake up that cake, what are you going to have? You’re gonna have something that resembles a cake, but it’s not gonna be the same thing. That’s what happens to people that come into recovery, into a twelve step group and say, “Okay, I’m gonna do the first step and I’m gonna do the twelfth step. And I’ll do a little bit of four and a little bit of five, but I’m not really gonna be praying and meditating. I don’t like getting on my knees and I’m not going to sit there with incense burning in the lotus position and do all this other stuff, that’s not me.” They start finding reasons and excuses to not follow the whole program. They won’t have the recovered state that they would have if they did it all. It will be something different. It may not be insufficient to keep them sober. They may stay sober for a long time, but at some point we believe they’ll either drink again or something worse.

There’s a lot of people who have just been able to maintain a tenuous sobriety and unfortunately they don’t even know what recovery, what the state of recovered is, because they’ve never experienced it, because they’ve never done the steps. If they do stay sober they are cranky, they’re resentful and they’re always fighting with someone or something.

One of the promises in this book is you stop fighting alcohol or anything else. So when you see somebody fighting, you know they haven't achieved a place of recovery. If they're arguing or running around, trying to get their point across to everybody, you know that they're not at recovered because that's one of the promises inherent in this book. There are a lot of people who haven't achieved this state called recovered and they don't know it.

You don't know what you don't know. How do you know what you're missing out on if you've never

## We Agnostics 1

Contemporary professional addictions treatment today has many challenges. The statistics on permanent recovery by people who undergo it are very bad. Extremely few alcoholics get well after treatment. Extremely few drug addicts stay clean after treatment. There are many reasons for this; one is the tendency of the field to move away from the 12 step model. One place that promotes better practices and more access to treatment are the symposiums that C4 Recovery Solutions facilitates. The Cape Cod Symposium is the best of its kind. They get the top speakers. Almost every one of the speakers are absolutely phenomenal. These are people that are dedicating their lives and careers to improving the quality of alcoholism and addiction treatment. Treatment isn't the answer to everything. This is not an illness where you can go put yourself in a 28-day program and then everything's fine and you're perfect. There's a long continuum of participation that you need to maintain to be able to recover from ten or twenty years' worth of alcoholism. But these people really have learned about as much as you can possibly learn about preparing somebody for the lifetime journey of recovery.

One person who was there this year said, "You know, what I learned this last week, is that even with all the areas that we, I believe, are right on when we're talking about the twelve step program of Alcoholics Anonymous and others, we've remained still very blind to the fact that today's science matches up with this big book in ways that we had no idea. This facilitator gave a great presentation on what physicians could learn today from the book Alcoholics Anonymous. We can imagine a room with a hundred physicians hearing that statement and not being too happy about it. But there was also a really great, great clinical psychologist, PhD, who also as giving a similar talk on the efficacy of the twelve step recovery model in addiction treatment. And these are top level professionals who are intuitive enough to grasp the, the enormity of the recovery process coming out of this book.

The people at the top levels of addiction get this, they just do. They get the power of this book. And some of the other ones just go to school where they don't teach the big book and they don't teach spirituality and they don't teach the twelve steps, they're not going to have that same perspective. But if you've been around enough and you've seen enough recoveries, you're going to know many, if not most of the true recovery's, come from the transformative experience that you can work yourself through, with God's help, from this book

The true doctors' opinion may be different today than it was in 1939, but the good doctors still have a very high opinion of what we do in effective 12 step fellowships. We heard one of them say if, if a treatment professional does not refer you to Alcoholics Anonymous, a sponsor, and a twelve step program, they should be guilty of malpractice.

To really understand this twelve step model, you need to experience it. In other words, you need to take these spiritual exercises and do them to understand them at a deep level. These are steps that we took, so if you take these steps you really take them. We are not talking about taking them in your head. When it says to go out and make amends, get yourself some airline tickets and start roaming around where you burned all your bridges and you start making amends. The people that actually experience that level of the twelve steps are forever adherent to and supporters of this, because they know experientially. If you're at a support group and you see the steps up on the wall and you read them, they don't look very powerful. They don't look like that could possibly be your answer. My answer is a better job and a woman that doesn't yell. I don't see any step there that has what I need.

The fact of the matter is these things really have to be experienced. So of course there's gonna be a lot of clinicians that don't have a lot of experience with it because maybe they're not an alcoholic or an addict who, who got through the recovery process in a twelve step fellowship. They're going to have a different view of it, but what I would advise anyone is just put the statistics together. There's a lot of heavy drinkers and drug abusers that get clean on their own and go off and have decent lives, but the chronic people, the people who started showing up in jails and, and emergency rooms and detoxes, if you look at that particular population and you make a study of who'd recovered, you find out what they did, that the high majority got involved in the support fellowships and actually paid attention to the steps.

It's not a very scientific way to do this, to just observe. Let's look at heart or cancer treatment, the outcome data; they pay attention to the outcomes of the treatment. They've got it down in surgery that the data is so granular that they can tell you the survivability of a patient can be improved by a certain type of scalpel. The problem in addictions and drug treatments is, they have not even started to follow outcomes to that kind of level. Once once the industry gets forced into following outcomes to fit into the rest of the medical establishment models, they're going to have to really look at what works and what doesn't work.

We can't wait for some of those studies, because if they follow those outcomes out one year, five years, ten years, we can almost guarantee what's gonna be in those outcome studies where processes worked. The fact that the high majority of people who were in that clinical class of chronics that actually find recovery and put their life back together, the high majority are going to have gotten themselves involved with a vital twelve step fellowship. Vital, meaning where they actually do the steps instead of talk about them or read them on the wall.

This, this chapter has come alive in many different incarnations for us over the years. There's been period of time where it's really hit us where we are and if you talk to certain religious personalities who are aware of this chapter and have studied it will say that this is the best introduction to moving into a relationship with God that they've ever read. In many churches, the pastors see the real stuff going on down in the basement where people are being converted, waking up their spirit and returning to a path toward God. That's why so many twelve step support groups are supported by churches. They know what's going on, these ministers, pastors and priests, and they want to support it. They understand that they have to stay out of it, but they want to support because, those groups are at times converting more people than they are upstairs.

Let's start with the title, *We Agnostics*. We have always seen it as being very interesting that it's not called *The Chapter to the Agnostic*.

That leads us to believe that anyone moving into this work is agnostic. Because some people will be horrified, they've been going to church for twenty years and they finally get into AA and they're not gonna want to be called agnostic. But, but agnostic may be seen differently than a disbelief in God. The root word origin is "ag" and "gnosis." That's, that's where agnostic came from. "A" means without and "gnosis" means knowledge. So, agnosticism is basically not having knowledge of God. It's not, not believing in God. It's not, it's not knowing, you don't know if there's a God whose power can be tapped. An atheist would say, there is no God and they're going to argue with you.

An agnostic is someone who hasn't really engaged in the argument. They just don't have any personal knowledge of God, or haven't gotten deeply enough involved in the quest for truth or for God. They need to become convinced. We believe to a degree we all suffer from agnosticism at some level.

When we do step 2 work with people and challenge them on what is their current agnosticism and they don't usually know what we mean. Your current agnosticism is this. God has really helped with your character defects and is there for you in many ways, but are you absolutely certain that God is going to provide for you financially, emotionally, the right relationships and happiness? Or do you have to take over those roles? Some may say "How in the world am I going to live spiritual principles in my work? I can't do that." Well, that would be current agnosticism that would not believe that God can take you to a better place. They don't have the knowledge or the belief that God can run their career. Or that God can provide the girlfriends that they may want, so we don't think that any of us can admit that we have zero agnosticism in certain areas of our life and we think that's normal and natural and God expects it, to be honest.

Many of the principles in recovery came directly from Christianity. But the people who wanted to follow Jesus closely, were told, "Don't have any money. Only have a certain amount of clothes. Expect God to provide your food and your shelter. Don't worry about it." Now, who among us doesn't worry about our money and our shelter on a daily basis? Where it involves our recovery from alcoholism or drug addiction, we need to be very careful we don't agnostimize our self right back out into drinking or drugging. We think one of the most important paragraphs in the book is the first paragraph of *We Agnostics*.

*"In the preceding chapters you have learned something of alcoholism."* That's the material in *More About Alcoholism and There Is A Solution*. *"We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic."* They were very interested in understanding the difference between the heavy or hard drinker and the alcoholic. That's something that nobody does in the support groups any more, but if you go back to the origins of AA, they had people that would qualify you and they had bouncers at the door. They did not want anyone walking into the meeting unless they were of the hopeless variety. We think cooler heads have prevailed over the years, and we've talked about this before. It's very important for people who have problems with alcohol who are alcohol abusers to get better and not cause trouble in their lives. But as far as the Alcoholics Anonymous process, in the early days, it was for the chronic alcoholics. Everybody else was excluded from the Alcoholic meeting, many family members were invited to the group but met separately.

Let's look at Doctor Bob and Bill Wilson and how they operated in Akron, from say '35 to, '38 or so. They would get a prospect, they would talk to them and they would get an idea of their situation. They would make sure the person wants to get over it, and then they would place them in the hospital. In the hospital, they would send in the team to tell their story, and to listen to the alcoholic tell their story. So the individual has been qualified by the whole group before they're engaged in the step process. After they're firmly engaged in the step process, then they can go to meetings. They weren't allowed to just walk into meetings like you are today.

You had to be well on your way into the steps to be considered to have an honest desire to stop drinking, to really mean business. They weren't interested in people who didn't really mean business. So by the time they got to the meetings, not only had they been fully qualified but they'd been engaged in step work. They were probably on their amends. So that's how they handled it in the first ten or fifteen years. There are different stories from different people. Different groups did it different ways but that's a description of the Akron genesis.

Here is the most critical sentence for identification purposes on, am I an alcoholic? *"If when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably an alcoholic."* Let's look at those two statements. "If when you honestly want to," we're not talking about, "I better quit drinking" or "I'm gonna quit for Lent", we're talking about it's really causing problems in our life and you really want, at least at certain periods of time, to separate from alcohol and you find you can't. *"Or if when drinking you have little control over the amount you take"*, so once you start drinking, you don't have any control. You usually get drunk every time you drink unless something stops you. If both of these are true you are probably an alcoholic. You have to have both. And let us explain why....it says "or" but it should be "and." Now if you honestly wanted to quit drinking but couldn't and didn't

have the physical allergy, the next time you have to drink, just drink one. Now let's say you have the physical allergy or the craving but you don't have the obsession, just never pick up a drink.

The alcoholic is trapped with both of these things. They can't stay away from a drink and they can't control it once they start. And that's what an alcoholic is. The one thing we worry about is if it's the first time they ever try to quit and they can and it's the first time they ever even tried, how do you know if they're an alcoholic or if they're just doing it on their own willpower?

Then you have to go back in the chapter where it says, if you aren't sure you get the mental obsession, try leaving drink alone for a year. If you're alcoholic, you won't be able to. So that's an issue with new people who honestly tell us this is the first time they've tried to quit drinking. We don't know what to do with them except to tell them, "Go away, try to quit for year on your own. If you find that you're drinking and you really didn't want to, you made commitment not to, then we can talk. Then you're showing signs of alcoholism."

Try leaving drink alone for a year.. If you can't do it, it may be worth a case of the jitters to get full knowledge of your condition. Then you're gonna come back and you're going to know you're in trouble, and you're going to do what you need to do.

If you're not sure you're in trouble or if you think that you've just stopped because you have good willpower, why are you gonna get involved in all these steps and everything else that's suggested? What people misunderstand is they think we're suggesting that the person go out and drink. What we're saying is if you're not sure, try not drinking any more. The one place in the book where it tells you to go ahead and drink is if you're not sure you have the physical allergy, if you're not sure that one drink insists on the second, the second demands the third and every single time you get drunk, if that's not your experience, this is a test for that.

You don't want to work with people as a spiritual advisor or as a sponsor that don't need to be worked with. You need to work with the people that are in real trouble. Your time is valuable, you need to be helping the ones who need it, want it and will do it. There are people that are dying, why work with people that can quit on their own? So there's a qualification that really needs to be met for us to take someone through step work, if when they honestly wanted to, they found that they couldn't quit and if when drinking or using drugs, they had little control over the amount they took, we should work with them. We need to be sure of that because there's just so many people today that wander into 12 step meetings because the cookies and the coffee are good, and you're not supposed to waste your time with people who don't mean business and who don't need you to help them. Your time is too precious.

We are not saying we should be excluding anybody from any meetings, there's a third tradition that states that anybody that will admit to alcoholism in a closed meeting, is supposed to be allowed in. It's not about exclusion; it's about whether or not we should work with someone.

CS: Okay. *"If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer."*

That's a powerful line, if you can't stay away from booze on your own unaided will and if when drinking have little or no control over the amount you take, you may be suffering from an illness. They don't call it a disease in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. An illness, nobody can argue with. You, you're definitely ill, there's a lot of controversy still concerning alcoholism as a disease. Even though the American Medical Association has said it's a disease. Rather than engage in the controversy, illness is a, is a good thing to call it. But, *"you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience can conquer."* Now that's not always good news to hear. We sometimes say "no I want to go to a doctor. There's a hospital treatment program". If you're chronic, if you've honestly tried to quit drinking a multitude of times and found you couldn't, if every time you start drinking, you get the craving and get drunk, that usually has placed you beyond human aid and only spiritual aid has been found to work.

This is non-scientific; so many people misunderstand this, what is this God stuff and all this other, this other nonsense"? The fact of the matter is, you can be very scientific. You can document all the ways you tried to quit and failed. And then when you get involved in the twelve step program, document your way through the steps. But take every one of them, you can then document scientific accuracy of the statement that this thing works. Because *rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed this spiritual path*. Turn it into a science experiment. Challenge yourself. "Okay, I'll go through the steps, I'll document the whole process and we will see if this spiritual thing works". Because the great news is, it will. And, and when you get to the other side you're going to then understand it.

*"To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternative to face."* You know, there's two doors. There's dying an alcoholic death; there is living a long spiritual life. And you've got your prospect and you're standing there and you're showing them the two doors. "Over here is, is the alcoholic death. And over here is the spiritual life.

The spiritual life as a solution is not always wonderful news to people who are suffering from alcoholism. They see it as so far away from their experience and their personality and their behavior as to be too elusive to be helpful. *"But it isn't so difficult. About half of our fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after awhile we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted."* Now this is another important part: *"If a mere code of morals or a better philosophy of life were sufficient to overcome alcoholism, many of us would have recovered long ago."*

So, a code of morals or a great philosophy or a theology of life is not enough. In other words," I know how to live. I've

read the Ten Commandments, I've read the Sermon on the Mount, I try to live by those, those rules. I go to church all the time". That is not going to be enough. That's intellectual, that's not experiential. *"But we found that such codes and philosophies did not save us, no matter how much we tried. We could wish to be moral, we could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there."* Let's look at a better philosophy of life. Let's look at the big book. Okay, we've read the big book. Is that gonna keep us sober, reading it? No, because that's a philosophy until you turn it into an experience.

We need protection and we need direction, and we need help. And sometimes that's not what you're gonna get in a contemporary church. You're gonna get really good lessons, really good sermons, there's gonna be a lot of social activity, but what we need is bigger than that, we're in real trouble as alcoholics. We need to understand our defeat and move toward God with a humility, that we are not gonna make it without a vital experience that only God can provide.

*"We could wish to be philosophically comforted, in fact we could will these things with all our might, but the needed power wasn't there."* The power to stay sober. *"Our human resources as marshaled by the will were not sufficient. They failed utterly."* Our human resources are our willpower, our knowledge, our experience, all of those things are human resources and they're not gonna be enough. You hear a lot of things in support groups, there's a whole series of one-liners that sound like they're handing you the responsibility for making the decision not to drink. Now if you're an unrecovered alcoholic, you don't have access to that decision. You lack power, choice and control. You are going to drink, and you're going to wonder why you drank. And if somebody's been handing you those one-liners, "Kid, just don't drink, no matter what, just remember the last drink...keep the memory green." If that's all that you've heard, you're gonna think that you have failed and this is not gonna work for you. And that's not the case. A lot of time there's no experienced group members to show, to lead you down this path because many times, they've not been down this path. So if you have been going to meetings and still drank, you might not have done it right. And it might not be even your fault that you haven't done it right. When the blind lead the blind, what happens?

*"Lack of power, that was our dilemma."* Your dilemma as an alcoholic is lack of power. Ask yourself this "if I had the power to not drink, or if I had the power to drink responsibly, would I not have done a better job by now? Lack of power... you don't have the power to do that. You're powerless; when you admit in the first step that you're powerless over alcohol please understand: powerless is powerless. If there's anything you can do, then you're not really powerless, are you? Just, just do that thing you think will keep you from drinking. But the fact of the matter is, nothing works for us.

We, sometimes we stay sober a month, sometimes we stay sober a year, but we're always drinking again. *"Lack of power was our dilemma. We had find a power by which we could live and it had to be power greater than ourselves. Obviously."* This is a great statement telling us what this book is about. *"Well, that's exactly what this book is about."* *How to find that power, how and where to find that power. "Its main object is to enable you to find a power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God. Here difficulty arises with agnostics. Many times we talk to a new man and watch his hope rise as we discuss his alcoholism and explain our fellowship. But his face falls when we speak of spiritual matters, especially when we mention God, for we have reopened a subject which our man thought he had neatly evaded or entirely ignored. We know how he feels."* *"We have shared his honest doubt and prejudice. Some of us have been violently anti-religious."*

Many of us have unbelievable prejudice. But that type of prejudice, this book asks you to set it aside...it doesn't even ask you to get rid of it. It says, "But we beg of you to set it aside." That prejudice, because you can allow that type of prejudice to kill you. If something interferes with you engaging in this process and you're a real alcoholic, you can die because of your prejudice. The only place in this book where it begs you to do something, it's to set aside the prejudice against organized religions and other spiritual matters.

There is much more good going on in churches than there is bad, but as an alcoholic, what happens is you focus on the things that are negative. We blame an illness like alcoholism on God. When we are getting better and as we're recovering, we recognize, wait a minute....what man does and what God does, many times, are totally on the opposite side of the scale.

A relationship with God was such an unbelievable turn-off for some of us. We believe that the free will that God granted us, because he loves us, has enabled mankind to do all kinds of stupid and horrific things, but we also begin to believe that if we align our self with God's will, and with spiritual principles, that we're gonna have less turbulence in our life and we move closer to recovery. Our destiny is to learn to be compassionate and charitable to other people.

There's a lot of people that get spiritual direction from the people in religion. In this book, it says, go see priests, ministers, rabbis, and ask them for a book, ask them for help, ask them for some spiritual direction, do your fifth step with them. This book is very quick to point us toward the professionals, toward the spiritual professionals.

*"We know how he feels. We have shared his honest doubt and prejudice. Some of us have been violently anti-religious. To others, the word 'God' brought up a particular idea of him with which someone tried to impress them during childhood. Perhaps we rejected this particular conception because it seemed inadequate. With the rejection, we imagined we had abandoned the God idea entirely."*

It was inconvenient for some of us to have the thought of a creator or a divine being watching over us or keeping track of what we were doing, because we were getting involved in drugs and alcohol. We think, we were all looking for comfort in booze and drugs and ultimately our comfort is gonna come from a relationship with God.

*"With that rejection, we imagined that we had abandoned the God idea entirely. We were bothered with the thought that faith and dependence upon a power beyond ourselves was somewhat weak, even cowardly. We look upon this world of*

warring individuals, warring theological systems, and inexplicable calamity, with deep skepticism. We looked askance at many individuals who claimed to be godly. How could a supreme being have anything to do with it at all? And who could comprehend a supreme being anyhow? Yet in other moments, we found ourselves thinking, when enchanted by a starlit night, 'who, then, made all this?' There was a feeling of awe and wonder, but it was fleeting and soon lost."

There's scientists today who are studying the origin of the big bang. Almost all scientists believe today that the big bang started the universe some sixteen billion years ago. They all believe that the universe wasn't here and now it's here. It just manifested out of nothing. That doesn't make any sense. So what a lot of them believe is that the universe began because of the idea of God. And the more they study these subatomic particles and the more they understand about the cosmology of the universe, the more they believe that this couldn't just have happened. There has to be a divine purpose to it. So even the people who want to just believe in science, when it gets down to the facts, there are questions they are never gonna answer. And believe it or not, the most logical answer, scientifically logical answer, is that there was a process behind the creation of the universe. These people who have spent their entire lives as physicists and researchers are starting to ask themselves the ultimate questions, which is, why? Why is all this? And the only answer they can come to is, it had to come from an idea.

"We looked askance at many individuals who claimed to be godly." "Yes, we of agnostic temperament have had these thoughts and experiences. Let us make haste to reassure you. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that power, which is God." So you need to get to willingness. If you can't get to willingness, you're in trouble. One of the things that the twelve step support groups do not tell you is what type of a God to believe in. But they do tell you that's if you don't get a relationship with God, you're going to die.

You read in Doctor Bob's story in the back of the book where he says "If you don't believe in God, I feel sorry for you." He says this because your suffering is going to continue and you're going to die." That's really what these people believed. They believed that the only way out was through a relationship with God and a life on spiritual lines.

The original manuscript was put together of this book and then it was sent out to people of religion and psychiatry, medical people and editors, and it came back with a lot of suggestions. And some of the suggestions were, "Bill, you need to tone this down. You're saying you need to, you need to...why don't you say, we did, we did?" And then they counted how many times God was put in and they go, "You might actually be scaring people off by, by doing this, why don't you make it a little easier to digest for some people and hopefully that'll get them in the door?" So he made allowances and he put "power greater than yourself" and "God as you understand him", but there's really no doubt that the early AAs had a fundamental monotheistic outlook on God.

So you start where you are. You start where you are and if you're an atheist, just totally agnostic or was not raised with the idea of God, well, you can start there. All you need to do is be, be willing to be open to this. We know people who've come to a relationship with God in step two, we have known people who have come to a relationship with God in step three, and we have known them to come to a relationship with God in step five. We have known people who came to a relationship with God in step nine, ten, eleven and even known people who had to start working with other people before they started to get a real belief in God. You take these steps as if there's a God, if you don't believe in God, and God will be revealed to you. Each of us has our own personal journey and experience.

## We Agnostics 2

The alcoholic is usually someone who can't learn the lesson the first time. We have to be tested time and time again before we finally realize that maybe we should stop driving, if not drinking and driving. That is a sign of alcoholism, if you decide to not drive instead of not drinking.

Okay, we are picking up on We Agnostics again, and are at the bottom paragraph of page 50 of the fourth edition of the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This chapter We Agnostics and the concept of spiritual recovery shows us how vitally important it is for us to see that a connection to God as the ultimate solution to addictive illness. There are a lot of people who are advertising cures for addiction and alcoholism and a lot of people that talk about recovery from this illness in ways that not have to do with spirituality or with a belief in God. We are not going to criticize any specific methodology, if something works for you, that's great. But when you look at the amount of recoveries that have taken place through adherence to the processes in the book Alcoholics Anonymous, you're gonna see that this is the way that it's worked for the most people the most times. So if you are suffering from alcoholism or even different kinds of addictive illness, it's important for you to pay attention to what they're trying to talk about in this book. The whole purpose of the book Alcoholics Anonymous is to lead you to come to believe that a power greater than yourself can restore you to sanity and then offer you the actions necessary for you to develop a personal relationship with that power that can solve your problems.

"Here are thousands of men and women, worldly indeed. They flatly declare that since they have come to believe in a power greater than themselves, to take a certain attitude toward that power, and to do certain simple things, there has been a revolutionary change in their way of living and thinking." That's a powerful sentence. All they needed to do was take a certain attitude toward that power and to do certain simple things. That results in a revolutionary change in their way of living, how they are acting, and their thinking.

To have a revolutionary change, that's the significant personality change, that shift in perception and personality and behavior, they're talking about for recovery. That's necessary for recovery. When you hear somebody say that all you need to do is not drink, that's usually a heavy drinker who's been successful just not drinking. The alcoholic, the person that this book was written for, is someone that needs an entire psychic change. They need a revolutionary change in the way they live and in the way they think. *"In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources, they found that a new power, peace, happiness and sense of direction flowed into them."* They're talking about the beginning of the spiritual awakening here.

For most people who start to work these steps, power, peace, happiness and a sense of direction will flow into them. They begin to have an amazing amount of power, peace, happiness and sense of direction in their life. This says they found a new power. They connect and allow a power to manifest through them and this is the marvelous thing about this recovery process. When you think about Bill Wilson and Doctor Bob and Hank Parkhurst and the people that were putting all this together, they really did tap into the direct interventionary power of God. And then they decided to show other people how to do it too.

Alcoholics sometimes read a lot of self-help books. Many of us have had shelves of them. They were all about how to be a better you, how to do things better, how to change the way you think, how to change the way you behave. They're all basically leading you toward an improved self-awareness or an improved behavioral pattern. There are very few books out there that are about tapping into the actual power of God.

The author has worked with a lot of hopeless drunks. He's been volunteering at VA's and rehabs and detoxes and he is constantly being sent people to work with who are really at the bottom level. These are people who have been in treatment many times and they're showing up at support group meeting, they're relapsing, everybody's mad at them and they're just at the absolute lowest possible rung on the ladder. He has seen them embrace this process and not only get sober and recover, but reclaim a life that they never even had beforehand. We believe a grateful alcoholic is not someone who gets their life back, but someone who has a much improved life even before they started drinking. Their life is improved from anything they've experienced before in their life. And this is what can happen when you can tap in to the recovery process, the very simple way of tapping into the power of God.

*"This happened soon after they wholeheartedly met a few simple requirements."* Again, this is a program of action. This is not a program of suggestions, it's a suggested program. So if you want these things, you can't read about them, you can't think about them, you actually have to do them. Many people will say there's no requirements in some of the support groups. That refers to membership not recovery. There are a lot of musts in this book if you wish to recovery. So there is one requirement for membership in a support group with twelve traditions, but for recovery or continued sobriety, there's a whole lot of requirements.

*"Once confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence, they show the underlying reasons why they were making heavy go of life. Leaving aside the drink question, they tell why living was so unsatisfactory."* The people that wrote this book understand that you don't have a drinking problem. You have a sobriety problem. You can't stay sober; sobriety becomes untenable after a period of time to the alcoholic. So they say, leave aside the drink question...don't even think about the booze. Why is living your life so unsatisfactory? They go on to talk about a number of things in this, especially in the next chapter, that really shows that our lives really are unsatisfactory and it has to do with our alcoholism, not necessarily our abusive drinking.

*"They show how the change came over them. When many hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness in the presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith."* The consciousness of the presence of God is the most important thing in their life. They believed that the consciousness of the presence of God is almost in every waking moment you know that God is with you, that offers an amazing sense of power and comfort. Who wants to live with loneliness, fear and anxiety all the time? When you really tap into the consciousness of the presence of God, you have a sense of power, a sense of comfort, a sense of assurance that everything is going to be okay. And I think that's what we looked for in alcohol. When life was just getting to be too much we knew four or five drinks we are not going to worry about it anymore. We were gonna feel that comfort we were searching for. God is with us and then that gives us that serenity that so many people look for in alcohol or drugs. We're all trying to find it in different ways. And most of the ways that we're trying to find it are not the right ways to find it. Ask yourself, have you ever met a religious man or a very spiritual man who is unflappable. They have a smile on their face. The building could be being bombed and they would have that sense of peace and serenity about them.

We can attain that. We can attain some really true happiness in our life. This book, Alcoholics Anonymous, is a great introductory to the spiritual living.

*"This world of ours has made more material progress in the last century than in all the millenniums which went before. Almost everyone knows the reason. Students of ancient history tell us that the intellect of men in those days was equal to the best of today. Yet in ancient times material progress was painfully slow. The spirit of modern scientific inquiry, research and invention was almost unknown. In the realm of the material, men's minds were fettered by superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas. Some of the contemporaries of Columbus thought a round earth preposterous. Others came near putting Galileo to death for his astronomical heresies."* Scientists and other people would come up with a really brilliant idea that might go against some of the common practices and you had to watch yourself back in those days. They'd burn you at the stake. They'd execute you; declare you a heretic or a political agitator. Scientific progress was very slow up until the last 150 years because you could be put to death for having a good idea.

*"We asked ourselves this...are not some of us just as biased and unreasonable about the realm of the spirit as were the*

*ancients about the realm of the material?" Are we unreasonable? Are we biased about the spiritual world? We didn't think that there were real answers in the spiritual world even though in a way we were seeking the spiritual world. Carl Jung made a play on words in a letter to Bill Wilson one time. You got to the spirit shop, a lot of the times the old liquor stores were called spirit shops. Jung talked about the word spiritus and said is the like the breath, the knowing or understanding of God. And he likened it to the alcohol, what we alcoholics are looking for, is they're looking for a touch of the divine. They're looking for a connection in the divine. Carl Jung recognized that and did a play on the words. So we think we were looking for spirituality but we were also biased and unreasonable. We were not really open and teachable as far as the spiritual world was concerned. I just really thought I knew everything.*

Sometimes we thought we were smarter than most people and understood things at a deeper level than most, and yet we were dying from a spiritual, physical and mental illness.

*"Even in the present century, American newspapers were afraid to print an account of the Wright brothers' first successful flight at Kitty Hawk. Had not all efforts at flight failed before? Did not Professor Langley's flying machine go to the bottom of the Potomac River? Was it not true that the best mathematical mind had proved man could never fly? Had not people said God had reserved this privilege to the birds? Only thirty years later, the conquest of air travel was almost an old story and airplane travel was in full swing. But in most fields our generation has witnessed complete liberation of our thinking. Show any longshoreman a Sunday supplement describing a proposal to explore the moon by means of a rocket and he will say, 'I bet they do it, maybe not so long either.' Is not our age characterized by the ease with which we discard old ideas for new, by the complete readiness with which we throw away the theory or gadget which does not work for something new which does?"* Now here's where he's trying to soften us up.

Today we really can discard old ideas for new. We can be completely ready to throw away a theory or a gadget that does not work for something new which does. So we need to be open-minded like that if we're blocked off from the spiritual world or from a relationship with God. *"We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn't apply to our human problems this same readiness to change our point of view."*

Bill is about to speak to us and give us a list of what he terms The Bedevilmings, untreated alcoholism. Let's look at the spiritual malady. Let's look at where our lives have become unmanageable. This is a really good description of untreated alcoholism. They told us earlier to leave aside the drink question. Forget about drinking. Let's just look at our lives. This is also a first step awareness exercise.

*"We were having trouble with personal relationships. We couldn't control our emotional natures. We were a prey to misery and depression. We couldn't make a living. We had a feeling of uselessness. We were full of fear. We were unhappy. We couldn't seem to be of real help to other people."* These are some of the bedevilmings. Now here's how we can turn them into personal questions. Place your name on the line. Was \_\_\_\_\_ having trouble with personal relationships? Is it possible we were not getting along with people in general? Could \_\_\_\_\_ control his emotional nature? Were we suffering from depression, guilt, remorse, anxiety? Was it our experience that we couldn't wish those things away? Are we being driven by them? Are we prey to misery and depression? Could \_\_\_\_\_ make a living? We're not talking necessarily about making money. We know a lot of people that start their journey into sobriety when they're making a lot of money. We're talking about - can you design a life, can you design a satisfactory life for yourself. Is \_\_\_\_\_ suffering from a feeling of useless? Is \_\_\_\_\_ full of fear? Many of us had anxiety that was wrapped around us like a wet blanket. It was difficult for us to go anywhere without having three or four drinks. Was \_\_\_\_\_ unhappy? Were we looking back on the past, and thinking those people did this to us or left us when I needed them most or these bosses were jerks. Could \_\_\_\_\_ be of real help to other people? Some of us wanted to be of help to people but we then made everything about us, about our feelings and desires. Now here's the question... *"Was not a basic solution of these bedevilmings more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flights? Of course it was."* So we need to ask ourselves, was not a basic solution of these bedevilmings more important than me being right about our current beliefs? Would you rather change your mind and survive or be right and die is really the question.

*"When we saw others solved their problems by the simple reliance upon the spirit of the universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did."* It worked for the first one hundred. It worked for the people that put this book together. They were low-bottom alcoholics, these were asylum, hospitalized type alcoholics who found a reliance upon spirit of the universe and their own personal relationship with God worked to solve their alcoholism. Reliance upon God makes things easier, we don't worry as much. We have a lot more serenity and we are not in that spiritually deteriorated place where alcohol looks like a good solution. They had a living, breathing relationship with their creator. It's not just recognizing that there is a higher power. When you experience the power of God coming through you, a new power, a sense of direction, a purpose, an ability to do things you just couldn't do before that relationship was established, when you experience that, it's a Powerful experience. You go from belief to faith. Let's look at an example of the difference between belief and faith. Let's say you move into a new town and you haven't lived there before. Your car is running really bad and you know you need to get it to a mechanic. You find a mechanic down at the end of the road. You believe that mechanic can fix the car so you take it down to the mechanic. Now, not only does the mechanic fix the car but when you get it back, it's running better than it ever has before. The next time you need mechanic work, you're not gonna believe he can fix it. You're gonna have faith he can fix it.

And faith is born sometimes from experience. And once we experience faith we believe that the faith we have is based on a million things that have happened in our life that could not have been coincidence. They could not have come about by chaos theory. It was a direct spiritual manipulation from a power greater than you. These things happen, and that's built

up an incredible faith in our life today

*"The Wright brothers' almost childish faith that they could build a machine which would fly was the mainspring of their accomplishment. Without that, nothing could have happened. We agnostics and atheists were sticking to the idea that self-sufficiency would solve our problems. When other showed us that God-sufficiency worked with them, we began to feel like those who had insisted the Wrights could never fly. Logic is great stuff. We liked it. We still like it. It is not by chance we were given the power to reason, to examine the evidence of our senses, and to draw conclusions. That is one of man's significant attributes. We agnostically inclined would not feel satisfied with a proposal which does not lend itself to reasonable approach and interpretation. Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe than not to believe, why we say our former thinking was soft and mushy when we threw up our hands in doubt and said, 'we don't know.' When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"* That is the second step proposition. This is a proposition that we need to come to terms with. The second step proposition is a conclusion that we need to come to in our minds. God either is everything or He is nothing. You don't necessarily have to say yes. We have known a lot of people who have come to a consciousness of the presence of God in some of the later steps. But this is something that you need to look at. God either is or He isn't.

*"Arrived at this point, we were squarely confronted with the question of faith. We couldn't duck the issue. Some of us had already walked far over the bridge of reason toward the desired shore of faith. The outlines and the promise of the new land had brought luster to tired eyes and fresh courage to flagging spirits. Friendly hands had stretched out in welcome. We were grateful that reason had brought us this far. But somehow, we couldn't quite step ashore. Perhaps we had been leaning too heavily on reason that last mile and we did not like to lose our support."* This happens so often. So many people who get into recovery, get involved in support groups, are like a squirrel in the road. Have you ever been driving down the road and a squirrel will run out in front of the car, he'll get almost all the way across the road, then he'll turn around and run back and you'll run over him if only he had kept going. So many people get involved in these recovery processes and they're almost all the way over the bridge of reason to the desired shore of faith, yet they can't jump ashore. That's where we have to be the people reaching out our hands saying, "Yes, this is real. Recovery is real. Your life can get better. Please come with us." That's our job.

*"That was natural but let us think a little more closely. Without knowing it, had we not been brought to where we stood by a certain kind of faith? For did we not believe in our own reasoning? Did we not have confidence in our ability to think? Yes, we had been faithful, abjectly faithful to the God of Reason. So, in one way or another, we discovered that faith had been involved all the time. We found, too, that we had been worshippers. What a state of mental goose-flesh that used to bring on! Had we not variously worshipped people, sentiment, things, money and ourselves? And then, with a better motive, had we not worshipfully beheld the sunset, the sea or a flower? Who of us had not loved something for somebody? How much did these feelings, these loves, these worships, have to do with pure reason? Little or nothing, we saw at last. Were not these things the tissue out of which our lives were constructed? Did not these feelings, after all, determine the course of our existence? It was impossible to say we had no capacity for faith, or love, or worship. In one form or another, we had been living by faith and little else. Imagine life without faith. Were nothing left but pure reason, it wouldn't be life."* That would be like Spock on Star Trek.

*"But we believed in life, of course we did. We could not prove life in the sense that you can prove a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, yet, there it was. Could we still say the whole thing was nothing but a mass of electrons, created out of nothing, meaning, nothing, whirling on to a destiny of nothingness? Of course we couldn't. The electrons themselves seemed more intelligent than that. At least, so the chemist said."* And it's funny that Bill was writing this in like 1938. Current physicists are believing more and more in the divine intelligence of matter in the universe. They're starting to believe that these particles and these waves and light are manifestations of a divine idea. They just don't have any better explanation. This is where modern physics and the origin of the universe studies are going these days concerning the questions that don't have a ready answer.

There is divine reason out there. *"Hence we say that reason isn't everything. Neither is reason, as most of us use it, entirely dependable, though it emanate from our best minds. What about people who proved that man could never fly? Yet we had been seeing another kind of flight, a spiritual liberation from this world, people who rose above their problems. They said God made these things possible, and we only smiled. We had seen spiritual release, but liked to tell ourselves it wasn't true. Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman and child, is the fundamental idea of God."* That's where the idea of God comes from. It's innate in us. It's built in.

*"It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other, it is there."* *"For faith in a power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself."* Many of us have had miraculous demonstrations happen time and time again. *"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly but He was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the great reality deep down within us. In the last analysis, it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us."* This paragraph really says a lot. *"Faith in God is part of our make-up. We have to search fearlessly but God is there within us. He was as much of a fact as we were. We found the great reality of God deep down within us. In the last analysis, it is only there that He may be found"*. This relationship with God has to come internally to us for it to be meaningful. We have read a lot of wordy books, a lot of religious books, a lot of self-help books and intellectually we kind of got a lot of information on God but it wasn't an internal

relationship.

It can be a very lonely existence out there for people who hold on to atheism or agnosticism. We think you can get by if without this if you don't have an addictive illness, but it spells complete disaster for the alcoholic or the addict not to have a connection to God. That's what they're desperately reaching for, whether they know it or not, that feeling of spiritual wellness in the drugs and alcohol.

*"We can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the broad highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you."* So how do you not fail? Let's say you're still agnostic or atheist, what you need to do is you need to sweep away any prejudice that you have. You need to think honestly. You need to search diligently within yourself. And if you do all that, you can join those in recovery on the broad highway. *"In this book you will read the experience of a man who thought he was an atheist. His story is so interesting that some of it should be told now. His change of heart was dramatic, convincing and moving. Our friend was a minister's son. He attended church school, where he became rebellious at what he thought an overdose of religious education. For years thereafter he was dogged by trouble and frustration. Business failure, insanity, fatal illness, suicide – these calamities in his immediate family embittered and depressed him. Post-war disillusionment, ever more serious alcoholism, impending mental and physical collapse, brought him to the point of self-destruction. One night, when confined in a hospital he was approached by an alcoholic who had known a spiritual experience. Our friend's gorge rose as he bitterly cried out, 'If there is a God, He certainly hasn't done anything for me!' But later, alone in his room, he asked himself this question... 'Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?' While pondering the answer he felt as though he were in hell. Then, like a thunderbolt, a great thought came. It crowded out all else... 'Who are you to say there is no God?' This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees. In a few seconds he was overwhelmed by a conviction of the presence of God."* This kind of experience happens a lot to alcoholics and addicts at the end of their run.

*"It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the presence of infinite power and love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his creator."* There's that term again. The conscious companionship of God. *"Thus was our friend's cornerstone was fixed in place. His alcoholic problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared. Save for a few brief moments of temptation, the thought of drink has never returned and at such times, a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemingly he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity."* In the second step, it says a power greater than yourself can restore you to sanity. What they're talking about is God restoring you to sanity in relationship to drink. It says here, seemingly he could not drink even if he would. We believe in powerlessness. Alcohol has the power or God has the power. If I'm rightly relating myself to God, then the power of choice in drink is in His hands, not mine.

We don't do well with choice of whether to drink or not. So the choice is removed as the sanity returns. We don't believe that we are handed the power back and then we can do whatever we want with it. We believe that the power is on loan. As long as we rightly relate ourselves to God we are safe and protected from the next drink or the next drug.

And it's His power; we think it's arrogant to claim that power for yourself. We have been restored to sanity now have power of choice. We think that's arrogant and dangerous. Besides what would it be if we chose to drink again? It would be insane, so if we got power back to drink and then did, what kind of power would that really be?

*"What is this but a simple miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made him willing to believe. He humbly offered himself to his maker – then he knew. Even so God restored us all to our right minds."* That's good news, that's a good promise. *"To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grew into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him, He disclosed himself to us."* Concerning this statement the 12 X 12 states "the hoop that you have to jump through is larger than you think".

## How It Works 1

So we are now moving into chapter five, the beloved How It Works. Bill wrote in some of his writings about how this chapter started. He had gathered a bunch of stories, he had written four chapters of the book prior to this, assembled it all, passed it back and forth to the different groups in Akron and New York, and gotten a lot of input on it. But it was time to show others precisely how they recovered from a hopeless state of mind and body. He had a little bit of trepidation about this. He knew how important it was going to be that he gets this right. He needed to combine the experience of the first one hundred into a process or a program that people could follow in book form. Now up to him starting work on chapter five, the steps per se did not exist. They existed as tenets or precepts of the Oxford Group.

They existed in spiritual exercises that many, if not all, of the AA's had performed and practiced in their lives but it hadn't been put down on paper. He tells the story, he was in bed; he was suffering from one of his many bouts of depression, a lot of times he just wouldn't get out of bed all day long back in those days. There was a lot of pressure on him. He put a pad and a pencil on his lap while he was lying in bed and asked for a little of inspiration. Probably something like, "God, please help me get this right. I need to lay out the path toward you for these alcoholics to follow, give me some inspiration."

The story he tells is the pen just started moving across the paper and he began this very deep process where he wasn't

really conscious of much. He realized it had only been five or ten or fifteen minutes, and he looked down at the page and he saw How It Works. He saw what gets read in a lot of the fellowship meetings.

We would like to lay it out as it was written, not as it was edited and put into the first edition of the big book. We would like to look at it as it was in manuscript form. And the reason for that is there's some differences and everyone that's ever been to the support groups that use the book Alcoholics Anonymous are familiar with How it Works. It gets read at a lot of meetings, but not a lot people have seen it in manuscript form. This is what was written in 1938 by Bill Wilson as he was putting the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* together.

*"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our directions. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault. They seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a way of life which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those too who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any lengths to get it, then you are ready to follow directions. At some of these, you may balk. You may think you can find an easier, softer way. We doubt if you can. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that you are dealing with alcohol, cunning, baffling and powerful. Without help it is too much for you. But there is one who has all power. That one is God. You must find Him now. Half-measures will avail you nothing. You stand at the turning point. Throw yourself under His protection and care with complete abandon. Now we think you can take it. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as your program of recovery.*

*One - Admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.*

*Two - Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

*Three - Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care and direction of God as we understood Him.*

*Four - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

*Five - Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*

*Six - Were entirely willing that God remove all these defects of character.*

*Seven - Humbly, on our knees, asked Him to remove our shortcomings, holding nothing back.*

*Eight - Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make complete amends to them all.*

*Nine - Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

*Ten - Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.*

*Eleven - Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*

*Twelve - Having had a spiritual experience as the result of this course of action, we tried to carry this message to others, especially alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after have been designed to sell you three pertinent ideas...A, that you are alcoholic and cannot manage your own life; B, that probably no human power can relieve your alcoholism; C, that God can and will. If you are not convinced on these vital issues, you ought to reread the book to this point or else throw it away. *If You may exclaim, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Our description of the you are convinced, you are now at step three, which is that you may make a decision to turn your will and your life over to God as you understand Him. Just what do we mean by that and just what do we do?"*

It's very, very interesting to study the original manuscript. It's important to look at the original manuscript because that is what the alcoholics put together, The manuscript was then passed around to the different friends in religion, psychiatry and medicine and some editorial suggestions were made. And one of them was, "Bill, you got to stop saying 'you, you, you'...why don't you say 'this is what we did' instead of 'this is what you have to do'".

Some of us like being directed a little bit more than told what someone else did, it hits you a little bit harder. We think that the early alcoholic experience is closer to the original manuscript than it is to the book Alcoholics Anonymous, because a lot of the suggestions to make editorial changes were put into the first edition of the book. So, if you really want to dig into the big book, put a big book on the left-hand side of your desk and an original manuscript on your right, and just check out the changes because they're incredibly interesting. There are whole paragraphs that are missing from the big book that were in the original manuscript.

Many changes seem wise. The direct language could be interpreted in a negative way, so Bill made the suggested changes. You don't want to demean anybody. Some of the confrontational techniques really have been shown to not work. Like, "Shut up and sit down, stupid." Take the cotton out of your ears and shove it in your mouth..." Maybe there's a time and a place for that but some of us were so demoralized and so shamed, we didn't need somebody else doing that. It doesn't mean that we shield people from the truth. We just have to treat them in a compassionate, respectful way while we're sharing the truth to them.

But the truth that you are going to probably die if you don't turn your will and your life over to the care of God, you can't manage your life, you need to fire your manager, you need to learn how to deal with life under new management are

important to share with an alcoholic. Management through a higher power, and if you don't do that, you're probably going to die. If we're afraid to say that to people it would basically be like telling somebody who's come into the emergency room at the hospital, "Well, if you feel like going into the operating room later, we'll go ahead and take that bullet out of your abdomen, but we want to make sure that you feel comfortable with everything first.." No, just put them on a gurney and get him in the operating room.

You don't have to be disrespectful or shaming to do that. We don't want to be guilty of not telling somebody the truth. And if you hold back some of the hard truths of the twelve-step recovery program, they can like you more, but they're going to end up being dead. So, there's a balance. There's so much depth and weight to this message of how it works. *"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path..."* Now that's an important statement. Rarely have we seen a person who has thoroughly followed our path, because the people who did the things that they talk about in this book were still sober at that point in time. *"Those who do not recover are people who do not or will not completely give themselves to this simple program"...* it's a simple program. There are people who cannot or will not, we like how he says that, it's a non-judgmental way of looking at it. He says people that don't make it who are exposed to this either cannot or will not give themselves to this simple program. What's scary today is there's a lot of twelve-step fellowships where no one has really offered this simple program. It's not explained to them.

They're basically being led to believe that it's a meeting-dependent sobriety, if you keep going to a whole lot of meetings all the time, you're going to be okay. That's not what they did back in the old days. What they did was they offered you the simple program and either you could not or would not work that program. And those were the people that would usually fail, the ones that are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. What type of honesty? Is he talking about cash register honesty? We believe he's talking about excepting the truth of step one. Have you really been honest with yourself about step one. Are you powerless over alcohol? Do you get the mental obsession? Do you get the physical craving when you drink? Is there a serious buy-in on your part as far as the unmanageability in your life? If you're capable of being honest with step one, there's really no other place to go except this simple program, because if other things had worked you wouldn't be at this point.

*"There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault. They seem to be born that way. They're naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average."* Then he talks about people with grave emotional and mental disorders, and today, you see a huge amount of what's known as co-occurring disorders in alcoholism recovery or drug addiction recovery. It's become incredibly easy for people who are on their way down the scale to get in front of professionals who can either accurately or inaccurately diagnose them for mental disorders.

Every year that goes by, there are a higher percentage of people in the support groups that are on psychiatric medications. What it says in here is, many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Anybody who's willing to be honest enough about step one, persevering and painstaking enough to move from step two to step twelve recover, regardless of other conditions in their life.

*"Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now."* He's talking about the personal stories in the back of the book. *"If you've decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it, then you are ready to take certain steps."* A lot of times what you'll hear is, "Kid, are you willing to go to any lengths?" And that question is being asked before they even know what any lengths looks like. To understand what willing to go to any lengths is you got to understand in the chapter "Working With Others". The first thing you're supposed to do is leave this book with your prospect. Have them read this book. So when you ask somebody are they willing to go to any lengths, they know what any lengths looks like. It looks like the instructions in this book. Are you willing to do those things? If you're willing to do those things, then you are ready to take certain steps.

*"At some of these, we balk..."* Some of us had a hard time with five and a hard time with nine, and it was like a process for us to get ready. And one of the amazing things we have found is that each step gives you the power to take the next one. Sometimes people get this look on their faces like, "I could never do step nine. Out of the question..." And what we try to explain to them is, "Of course you don't think you can do this step right now. You don't have the power to do this step right now. You get the power from steps one through eight. So don't write this step off yet, just because you don't have the power currently to do it, you need to do this one step at a time.

*"A lot of us think that we can find an easier, softer way."* Most people that come into twelve-step support groups today don't do a full buy-in, don't work the steps, don't become of service to that group, they're really looking for an easier, softer way. At best, they're looking for a meeting-dependent type of sobriety. At worst, they think that this is just not for me, I'm not really into this, this group is crazy, everybody's talking about their problems and I can't see how this could help me. And they're going to go back out and they're going to continue to look for ways to get their life put back in order that don't have anything to do with the meeting rooms. A lot of times, that's the fault of the fellowship. There are some really bad fellowship meetings out there. Every once in a while you hear, "I've never been to a bad meeting.", well many of us have. There are some meetings where everybody goes around the room and talks about their problems and their dysfunction and updates everybody about the issue of the day. You got to consider the newcomer. If a newcomer comes in there and thinks, "Well, how is talking with other people about very personal problems in my life going to help me?" The newcomer's right; it's really not. There's a deeper methodology to twelve-step recovery than just sitting around and talking about your problems.

*"With all earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start."* Fearless, trust in God that you can get through this process, thorough, that little voice in your head that's going to tell you that you don't

need to do this – don't listen to that little voice. You need to be fearless and thorough.

*"Some of us have tried to hold onto our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely."* It tells you to let go of your old ideas. It doesn't tell you to let go of your bad old ideas. It tells you to let go of your old ideas; that means all of them." So even if you think you have a good idea, you may not be right. So you need to let go of how you think everything runs to be open to new experience and to some new direction. The best possible atmosphere to be in for learning is to be open-minded. What it's doing is it's asking us to be open-minded about even things that you disagree about. Just be open-minded enough to consider them. Because if your mind, or your personal philosophy, or your life management skills, were going to get you out of trouble, they would have done so by now.

So, we need to be open to some new direction. *"Remember that we deal with alcohol, cunning, baffling, powerful."* And it certainly is. *"Without help, it is too much for us. But there is one who has all powerful. That one is God. May you find him now. Half-measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point, we asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery."* Remember these are not suggestions. These twelve steps are a suggested program of recovery. If you don't want to do these steps, what are you doing in a twelve-step fellowship? This is the program of recovery for the twelve-step fellowship. Why are you here if you don't want to go through all twelve steps? It doesn't make any sense at all. It would be like joining Oprah's book club and refusing to read any of the books but still wanting to discuss them.

If you don't like this suggested program of recovery, you should probably go somewhere else and not take up a seat in a twelve-step fellowship because you're just going to be part of the problem and not part of the solution. People die who do not get exposed to a solution.

*"One... We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and our lives had become unmanageable."* There's was a lot of material in the chapters up to this point that gave you the information you need to find your own truth about this.

*"Two... Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."* We get enough information going through We Agnostics to begin our process of belief, about the restoration of sanity, *about putting life under new management. We looked at the possibility of the healing power of God.*

*"Three... Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."*

*"Four... Made a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves"*

*"Five... Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."*

*"Six... Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. "*

*"Seven... Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."*

*"Eight... Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all"*

*"Nine... Made direct amends to such people wherever possible..."*

Wherever possible, not whenever possible, wherever possible, you sometimes hear whenever, it says wherever and there's a big difference.

*"Ten... Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it,"*

*"Eleven... Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."*

*"Twelve... Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs."*

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics. So what is the message that you're supposed to carry? You're supposed to carry the message of the spiritual awakening as the result of the twelve steps. That's the message. That's a message of depth and weight. There are a lot of messages that are going on all over support groups. Keep coming back....you could go on and on and on with these messages, and it's not that they're necessarily bad in and of themselves but the good can sometimes be the enemy of the best. If you want to really know what the treatment for alcoholism is, or drug addiction or any addictive illness is, it's having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, that's what the treatment is.

*"We tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all of our affairs. Many have exclaimed, 'What an order! I can't go through with it.' Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines."*

You always need to be willing to grow along spiritual lines. That is essential for this process. You need to be on the spiritual path. If you place yourself in God's hands and you get on the spiritual path, you're going to be okay. There are going to be times when you're in the barrel. There are going to be times when you are really going through some stuff. You're going to be in pain but you're going to be fine if you stay in God's hands, stay on the spiritual path and don't give up. You talk to any spiritual master, any of the Buddhists, the Christian mystics, the Sufi masters, they talk about a period called the dark night of the soul or the cloud of unknowing. These are periods on the spiritual journey where things become very difficult and you start to have a lot of self-doubt.

You start to think that maybe this isn't working; maybe this is the wrong way for you. I should be better than I am right now. These are just signposts on the spiritual path and they're basically telling you you're heading in the right direction. You just need to keep going.

There would probably be no problems in the twelve-step fellowships if you had informed group members with experience with recovery. If that's all that were in the rooms, the recovery rates would shoot back up to seventy, ninety percent. But that's not what you have. You have a lot of people who have gone to a million meetings and listened to a lot of the wisdom teachings and throw out trite little sayings every five minutes that have little or no direct relationship to a recovery

program. When it says spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection, spiritual progress is all you're ever going to get. You're never going to get spiritual perfection. If you know anything about the spiritual life, perfection is not something that you're ever going to want to claim. If you claim that, then you've lost your humility and if there's no humility, there's really no spiritual progress.

*"Our description of the alcoholic, our chapter to the agnostic and our adventures before and after may clear three pertinent ideas."* The description of the alcoholic is in More About Alcoholism and There is a Solution. The chapter to the agnostic is We Agnostics. Our personal adventures before and after are the stories at the back of the book. If you read those things, they're going to make clear three pertinent ideas.

*A, that we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives; B, that probably no human power could relieve our alcoholism; C, that God could and would if He were sought.*

These are the A, B, C's and if you take these literally they really point in the correct direction for the spiritual life. You cannot manage your own life. On your own willpower, without trying to integrate your actions into what you think God would have you do or be, you're going to be managing your life on a selfish basis. If you do that, it's selfishness and self-centeredness that's the root of the alcoholic's problem. It's the root of all spiritual illness. It's the root of your alcoholic illness, so if you could have done a better job on your own, you probably would have by now. So you need to consider switching managers. B, that probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. What are some human powers that cannot relieve you of your alcoholism? My sponsor, the meetings, your psychiatrist, your pastor, your rabbi, this list could go on.

None of these people have enough power available to offer you for you to be relieved of your alcoholism. That power needs to become manifest in you and it's a power that they described as the power of God, the power of God's healing. This manifestation of God is the absolute and ultimate recovery from an addictive illness. The spiritual malady manifests as a constant yearning and need for a connection to the divine. And you reach outside yourself to drugs and alcohol and gambling and sex and food and spending sprees. You reach outside yourself to try to fill this spiritual void. Filling this spiritual void with God is the ultimate treatment for alcoholism.

And it's an unorthodox treatment for an illness and it's misunderstood by so many people, it's maligned. People think that the people who practice these things are part of a cult or they're religious crackpots. It's accessing a spiritual power that exists. And you can call it whatever you want. It's the miraculous healing power of God that we can participate in by trying to align our will with what He would have us do and be. Following some of these simple spiritual exercises places us in proximity to this power and it's able to manifest through us. We should never say, "I've got the power now." We think the power moves through us and it is a direct manifestation of God, and it's not a given. In other words, if we drop the spiritual ball, if we stop participating in the maintenance of our spiritual condition, this power can dissipate and not be there at a level that's going to keep us sober.

But if we do continue to participate in the spiritual process, that power is there. There are so many statements in the book, we think they really understood that the alcoholic is going to have some doubts about if he seeks God, will he find Him. There's a great line in the Twelve and Twelve again that says the hoop that you're going to jump through is larger than you think it is. God will not make too hard terms for those who seek Him; that God could and would if He were sought. We need to be about the business of seeking God. It's through seeking God and continuing to seek God through a lot of these processes, through a lot of these exercises, through meditation and prayer that is the best possible atmosphere to be for long-term recovery.

*"Being convinced we were at three, which is we decided to turn our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that and just what do we do?"* Step three is just a decision but what a lot of people don't understand is they'll do the third step prayer and think they've turned their will and their life over to God. The decision needs to be followed by commitment and by action. To turn one's life and will over to the care of God., yes, we need to make the decision but if it's not followed up by the commitment to actually do the work to turn your life and your will over to the care of God, you won't be going nowhere. The decision is to live life along spiritual lines or die an alcoholic death.

## How It Works 2

How it Works is read traditionally in a lot of support group meetings and what we did was we went back to the original manuscript version. We then get a better understanding of How it Works that gets read so often. And at the bottom of page sixty, it says *the first requirement is that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success*. Now before that is, it says, *"Just what do we mean by that and just what do we have to do? So, being convinced we were at step three, which is that we had decided to turn our life and our will over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that and just what do we do?"* It's very ambiguous. Many times at meetings you hear, "just turn it over". You hear that until the cows come home. If you go up to someone and you ask them, "Hey, what do you mean by that? How do you turn it over?" They have no more clue than you do.

But there are some specifics in this book that talk about the process of turning one's will and one's life over to God. Now if you look at the term will and you look at the term life; will can be looked at as your thinking. Someone's last will and testament is the last thinking of an individual and what they want. Life is basically your actions. We're judged by our actions. So, if you turn your will and your life over to the care of God, that means your thinking and your actions. The first

requirement to do that is you need to really believe that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success. This is where a lot of advisors or sponsors say, "Well, look at the way your life is going, don't you see need a new manager...let's just look at your life...how's it been working for you with you in charge?" And most of the time, the people that are working through the steps are in a crisis of one kind or another. A lot of crises come along with alcoholism or drug addiction and problems pile up on you, and then become astonishingly difficult to solve.

So, you need to be convinced that if you continue to steer the boat, you're going to run onto the reef, just like you have been. We keep thinking, "Well, we'll do it right next time." Well, if we'd been able to do it right next time, next time would have happened a long time ago. So, really, this is a requirement to move forward. If you think you can still do it yourself, then you really can't move on, to be convinced that you need guidance in your life.

If there is still resistance sometimes you need to go back and reread the first sixty pages. If you're not convinced that you need some serious guidance in your life, then we just don't see that you're gonna move through the rest of the program with any conviction.

*"On that basis, we are almost always in collision with something or somebody even though our motives are good."*

Another exercise is to look at the next three pages or so, starting at the first requirement and place yourself in the text, ask yourself if any of this is true for you. You'll see that what Bill does is he paints a beautiful picture of the self-centered, self-seeking alcoholic. He really nails us to the wall. And a lot of times we're not going to recognize it. It can be very difficult for us to accept this as our operational platform but it actually was. We have been motoring along on selfishness and self-seeking. So it's good to turn these statements into questions.

Ask yourself are you almost always in collision with something or somebody even though your motives are good? You need to honestly ask yourself, is this case with me? Is this what my spiritual condition consists of at this point in time? Is this what I'm working with now?

Because it's not very good to be in collision with other people all the time. *"Most people try to live by self-propulsion. Every person is like an actor who wants to run the whole show, is forever trying to arrange the lights, the scenery, the ballet and the rest of the players in his own way. If his arrangements only stay put, if only people would do as he wished, the show would be great. Everybody including himself would be pleased, life would be wonderful."* We find that we are placed on this earth for whatever divine purposes God has in store for us, and we are living on selfishness and self-centeredness. I can't manage my own life. I'm alcoholic, yet I'm running around deciding what the boss should do, how my family should act, how my friends should be treating me. In other words, I'm an actor. I'm a bit player in this game of life. I want to start rearranging all the rules and everybody's task list. I've got problems with everybody." It's almost like if you were in a play going up to the director every five seconds and saying, "No, no, no. They should say this. I should do that. No, they should say that." It's unbelievably self-centered and yet that's how we operate. And we get resentful if people aren't playing the roles that we assign them the way we assign them and we get frightened if they don't act the way we want them to act. And we're way too busy trying to manipulate other people and we are not trying to become better actors ourselves.

We used to know what everybody should be doing. One of the greatest stories we ever heard was from Chuck C. out in California. He ran around and he made all his amends and then he said to his family members, "Listen, I will never ever ask you anything ever again in your life except one thing. If there's anything I can do for you, please let me know." He never tried to manipulate or tell anybody what to do after that. Some of us think "How is that even possible?" To not jump in the middle of everyone's life all the time, how do you be a parent? How do you be a husband? How do you be a family member? How do you go to work? How do you do anything if you don't tell people what to do? But we find it's actually possible to get through life without telling everybody what to do.

*"In trying to make these arrangements, our actor may sometimes be quite virtuous."* We might think we've got really good motives. I'm right, if you would do it this way, everything would be great. *"He may be kind, considerate, patient, generous, even modest and self-sacrificing."* That's the way we like to look at ourselves. *"On the other hand, he may be mean, egotistical, selfish and dishonest but, as with most humans, he is more likely to have varied traits."* So, we are going to get you to move around the playing field, if we have to bring you flowers, or if we have to point a gun at you. We are going to get you to move around the playing field. It's important for us to be manipulating our environment. And that means you got to do what I want you to do. *"What usually happens, the show does not come off very well. He begins to think that life doesn't treat him right. He decides to exert himself more. He becomes on the next occasion still more demanding, or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit him. Admitting he may be somewhat at fault, he is sure that other people were more to blame."* That's what many of us thought. We would give you the fact that maybe we didn't handle the situation as best we could, but those guys..." It absolutely had to be somebody else's fault when we had problems in our life. It would have been way too inconvenient for our problems to be of our own making.

Don't give us the responsibility of all of our problems, please. *"He becomes angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is his basic trouble? Is he not really a self-seeker, even when trying to be kind? Is he not a victim of the delusion that he can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if only he manages well? Is it not evident to all the rest of the players that these are the things he wants? And do not his actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? Is he not even in his best moments a producer of confusion rather than harming?"* We just could not believe people weren't seeing that we really had the clue that everybody should have. It was just amazing and the alcoholic who is somebody that will get sober and five minutes later they're wondering why everybody isn't following them. "Why isn't everybody listening to me? Don't you understand that I'm right"? And it's the soul sickness. That really is what the problem is with alcoholism. The problem is being the actor wanting to run the whole play. That's what the problem is

with the alcoholic. It's not necessarily the drinking. The drinking is a symptom of alcoholism.

It's a really bad symptom, especially with low-bottom alcoholics – you can drink yourself to death. But it's a symptom of the actor wanting to run the whole show, being selfish and self-centered in nature is what's wrong with the alcoholic. The more selfish and self-centered you are, the more distance you have from God. And being distant from God is what the Catholic Church calls being in hell today. They've redefined the term hell by saying it's a separation from God. So the more selfish and the more self-centered you are, the more separated you are from the spiritual power that really can bring peace and happiness to your life.

Selfishness and self-centeredness can manifest in non-alcoholics as well, but the alcoholic or the person whose substance-dependent has this as a trait that's almost always very apparent. It's something that they need to get over. They need to get to a point where they're not operating as selfishly and self-centeredly as they have been to be able to recover. The human condition, the human nature is such that we're all prone to character defects. We all fall short in word, thought and deed every single day, but with the alcoholic, these things can kill us. We don't have the option of being selfish and self-centered. These things will take us out, with the alcoholic; we seem to put a magnifying glass on all this selfishness. It's always in extremes.

*"Our actor is self-centered, egocentric as people like to call it nowadays. He is like the retired businessman who lolls in the Florida sunshine in winter, complaining of the sad state of the nation, the minister who sighs over the sins of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, politicians and reformers who are sure all would be utopia if the rest of the world would only behave, the outlaw safecracker who thinks that society has wronged him and the alcoholic who has lost all hope and who is locked up.*

*Whatever we protest, are most of us not concerned with ourselves, our resentments or our self-pity?"* You have to ask yourself that question...is that really what's concerning you most? It is very difficult for us to see that because we didn't really know how those things presented, but when we look back at our last years of drinking and our first months of sobriety, all we could think about were our resentments, our self-pity and ourselves. *"Selfishness, self-centeredness...that we think is the root of our troubles."* Think of a plant, think of a tree. The roots are basically what holds it up, what feeds it, and without those roots, it would die. So, the root of our troubles is selfishness and self-centeredness. It doesn't say the root of our troubles is drinking, or the root of our troubles is drugs. The problem isn't necessarily drinking or using drugs. The problem is why do we have to drink or drug? Why are we compelled to? The driver of our failure at life comes from the selfishness and the self-centeredness. *"Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate."* Look very deeply at this sentence, what does driven mean to you. Driven means having very little control something else is in charge. When it says we were driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking and self-pity, we step on the toes of our fellows and they retaliate, what that's telling us is, we are not necessarily in control of all of this stuff. Just recognizing that we are selfish and self-centered is not going to be enough to get to the other side of our problem.

Self-delusion...you hear in support groups all the time, "I'm in denial. Denial is not a river in Egypt." We don't think alcoholics have denial very often. Denial is basically you're sitting in a white room and you need to tell somebody it's not white. "This room is not white." You know it's white but you're denying that it's white. What happens with the alcoholic is, we're sitting in a white room and we think it's yellow. We really do think it's yellow and we'll argue to our dying day that it's yellow because we really think that. That's what being deluded is. So we're more apt to being deluded than we are to being in denial.

And stepping on the toes of our fellows...a lot of times we really don't recognize that we're stepping on the toes of our fellows. They may not like being moved around on the stage and told how to play their part. And sometimes people retaliate. Sometimes people cause us problems. And we don't see that we set ourselves up. We started the ball rolling. We placed ourselves in a position to be harmed and we don't see that either. And that's another type of delusion.

*"Sometimes they hurt us, seemingly without provocation, but we invariably find that at some time in the past, we have made a decision which later placed us in a position to be hurt."* Invariably...what does invariably mean? That means without variation, we find that at some point in the past we've made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be hurt. Our problems are of our own making, whether we think so or not. That's one of the reasons why we can't stand support group meetings where all people do is complain. They want to raise their hand and they want to update everybody on the problems they had that day and then they feel a little bit better and they move on. Recovery is about recognizing and internalizing the fact that your problems are of your own making.

You co-created every problem that exists in your life. You are at worst a co-creator; at best you're the one that's causing all the confusion. And to allow people to think that if they just share their problems, that's going to make them go away is foolish. Sharing is a good starting point. You should share with your spiritual advisor or you should share with whoever is taking you through this work, but that's only the beginning. You need to recognize that your problems are of your own making, because there's a lot of freedom in that.

If you're responsible for all the problems in your life that also means there may be a way out. If you're the one causing all the problems in your life, there's maybe a way you can stop causing problems. If it really is everybody else out there that's at fault, you don't have a prayer of changing everybody else so you can solve your problem. You would be trapped. Coming to the realization that you are responsible for your own problems is actually a very freeing perspective. Because it means there's some hope. Maybe you don't need to cause confusion and unhappiness all around you. Maybe there's a way out of it.

*"So our troubles we think are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so."* When you're first working with somebody, every once

awhile they'll come up with a really lame fourth step, they just don't get it. They don't see all the confusion and discord they're causing in their lives. So we usually don't think that we're self-will run riot. But we are. *"Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must or it kills us."* Important warning, it kills us. That is a very important warning.

It doesn't even say that booze will kill us. It says that selfishness will kill us. *"How do we become unselfish? Well, God makes that possible, and there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without his aid. Many of us had moral and philosophical convictions galore but we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to."* Many of us had moral convictions, philosophical convictions. We have read a lot of the philosophers and the Bible and all kinds of stuff, and we understood the commandments and the beatitudes. We knew all that stuff, but there's no way we could live up to it because we were terminally selfish. If there was a left-hand turn that would get us something and a right-hand turn that would be the right thing to do, more often than not, we would go left because we wanted something right then and there.

*"Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness by much by wishing or by trying on our own power. We had to have God's help."* Let's say you've admitted or you've come to the realization, that selfishness and self-centeredness is the root of your troubles, and you don't think you need God. What you could do is say, "Okay, I don't need God. From now on, don't be selfish and don't be self-centered, starting right now, go." And see how long it's going to last. See how far you're going to get. Right until you pull out of the driveway and somebody cuts you off. Or you get home and your roommate hasn't done the dishes. You can't just not be selfish if it's been part of your nature for so long. You need to have God's help.

*"So, this is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God."* That's a directive. We need to stop playing God. How do we play God? We play God by trying to move other people around the stage, by being the actor who wants to run the whole show. How do we know whether God is helping to direct those other actors or not? How do we know what's right and what's wrong? How do we know what's good and what's bad for everybody and everything? Who appointed us God? So one of the first things you have to start doing, or asking God for help with is bossing everybody around, knowing better than everybody else about everything. That needs to be addressed. *"Next we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our director."* There are three relationship directives in the third step. Another mistake we see people making all the time is they think saying the third step prayer is taking the third step. It really isn't. The third step prayer is an affirmation prayer and an affirmation prayer is where you are affirming something that you already believe. So you say the third step prayer after you've become convinced of all these things. Otherwise it's an empty prayer.

So, if God is going to be the director, what does that mean? That means that we need to seek God's guidance in matters that pertain to our life. That really comes in a huge way in step eleven, seeking direction through prayer and meditation. *"God is going to be the principle, we are His agents"*. What does that mean? That's another relationship directive. Think of a life insurance agent. The life insurance agent knows the rules, is empowered by the home office and as long as he plays by the right rules, as long as he does everything legally, and according to the business plan for the life insurance company, he can go out and he can sell insurance and that insurance will protect families if a loved one dies. So he is empowered by the home office. If we live along spiritual lines, we are being empowered by the home office, which is God, to go out and do our business.

*"He is the principle and we are His agents. He is the father and we are His children"*, and I think everybody understands what a parent's role is. A parent's role is to bring the child into existence, to nurture it and keep it safe and protected and to try to teach it how to live. That's what God does with us, in many mysterious ways. We think certain lessons come our way until we learn them. And we need to pay attention to those lessons now if God's going to be the father.

We begin to believe that as we seek direction from God that things are going to be okay. We don't sit around like scared to death about paying the next bill but that doesn't mean we are not being responsible. Having that sense of peace and knowing that God is the principle, the father and the director gets us away from the fear that we would normally have, if we were living selfishly and self-centeredly. We need to be responsible, that's certainly part of the spiritual life, but that fear, that anxiety, that sense of impending doom that would follow us around as alcoholics, that's a manifestation of alcoholism. That's one of the ways it presents. And when you get to recovered, the state of recovered, those are not things that are going to devastate you, those emotional feelings. That shouldn't be part of your spiritual make-up any more.

*"Most good ideas are simple and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom."* Bill uses a lot of construction references and anyone that doesn't know what a keystone is...is you build an arch and you have to hold the arch up until the keystone is put in place, and then all the support under the arch can be taken away because the keystone holds the arch together. This concept of God as the director, the principle and the father is the keystone to the arch through which you will walk to freedom. So if you don't have that keystone in place, if God isn't your director, your principle and father, you're not going to have an arch through which you can walk to freedom. There's many construction references in here and they're very important to pay attention to. *"When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things happened."* Each action step has a series of promises. Another thing that we personally don't like is in a support group meeting, they'll read "the twelve promises", first of all, there isn't the twelve promises. There are many promises in this book.

If you counted them, there would be well over two hundred significant promises in this book. So by putting a shade up on the wall that says, "The Twelve Promises", you're short-changing them by telling them there's only twelve. And

usually, the promises that are read are the ninth step promises, which most people don't even get to because most people don't go through the work to the point of making direct amends. So we don't really agree with putting that carrot up on the wall without putting it in context, explaining exactly what you mean by "the twelve promises," "the twelve ninth step promises" You need to at least be halfway through the ninth step before these things are going to manifest. That really should be part of the explanation.

*"We had a new employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed if we kept close to Him and performed His work well."* So what are you going to need to do if God is going to start taking care of you as the director, the principle and the father? What do you need to do? You need to keep close to Him, and perform His work well. *"Established on such a footing, we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn."* What about reading these promises at the next support group meeting, instead of the ninth step promises?

These are unbelievable promises, *"more and more we become interested in seeing what we can contribute to life"*. We're going to get the actual power of God in our lives. *"As we enjoyed peace of mind"* Peace of mind is actual bliss. It's feeling wonderful. *We'll live life successfully. We'll face life successfully.* We're going to be successful. These are unbelievable promises. *"As we came conscious of His presence, we begin to lose the fear of today"*. I'm not afraid of anything that's going to happen today. I'm not afraid of anything that's going to happen tomorrow. And, *"or the hereafter"*...you're not even going to be afraid of death. *"We were reborn"*.

*"We were now at step three."* So, the affirmation of the third step prayer is, we're affirming all of these things that we read here so far. That's what we're doing when we say the third step prayer. *"Many of us have said to our maker as we understood Him, 'God, I offer myself to Thee, to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties that my victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always."* Now that prayer goes against every selfish and self-seeking and self-centered instinct we have because that prayer is basically saying, "Relieve me of the bondage of being me so that I can be of help to you." That particular prayer is really amazing because it attacks alcoholism. If alcoholism is being selfish and self-centered, this particular prayer goes absolutely against that. *"We thought well before taking this step, making sure we were ready, that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him."* So you need to think well before taking that step. You need to be ready to abandon yourself utterly to God. And this is why they found that the low-bottom alcoholics had a tendency to recover and some of the people who hadn't been hurt that bad still had a little bit of trouble.

If you are thoroughly convinced that life run on self-will can hardly be a success, you're going to embrace this. If you think you're doing a good job you may not. They found in the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous a lot of the people who were really in trouble were at a point where they could abandon themselves utterly to Him. They had nowhere else to go. They were out of plans and AA was very successful in the early days with people who were really in bad trouble. And that's good news to us today. We don't need to be as hurt as some of these people do. We just need to be paying attention to this program. We need to understand what recovery is about and not accept sobriety but insist on recovery. So often our first impressions or our understanding of something is wrong. And when we were first exposed to the twelve step process, we really didn't see how it was going to particularly benefit. Sometimes you just have to believe that there's a better way and give it a chance, give it a shot.

### How it Works 3

"How it Works" is probably may be the one thing many people are familiar with, at least the first 2 pages, these are read at the start of many AA meetings. This is the chapter where the specific directions start to be laid out. It talks earlier that the purpose of the book is to show others precisely how we have recovered. So in "How it Works", Bill had to get to work showing exactly how the first one hundred recovered. You hear all the time, rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed the path. When you look at the chapter "How it Works" and then "Into Action", those are really basically the two chapters that lay out what you need to do to thoroughly follow the path, what you need to do to recover from alcoholism.

When we looked at the third step prayer, we talked about it being an affirmation prayer, about affirming a decision that we've made to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God as we understand Him. We had to understand we needed to start to live life along spiritual lines, to make the commitment to live life along spiritual lines. Alcoholism is our problem; spiritual living is our solution as alcoholics. What they've found from the twelve-step processes is that when you do the things that they lay out in this book, when you're fearless and thorough, what happens is the result is recovery from alcoholism. There are a lot of misconceptions and there's a lot of bad information that you'll find in the support group meetings today. There are a lot of people who really are looking for easier, softer ways. They're trying to share their way sober. They're trying to attend meetings their way sober. They're trying to make coffee their way sober. And all those things are really good but it doesn't even come close to thoroughly following the path. Meetings and sharing are not an AA program. What an AA program consists of is to do the things that are in How it Works and Into Action, actually do those things. And that's what an AA program is.

The strict adherence on this process has become unpopular in some of the recovery rooms because people want easier, softer ways. It's more fun to sit in a circle and complain about how bad the day is. That's a lot more fun than actually taking inventory or going out and making direct amends. But to participate in meetings is not seen as sufficient as an AA program. The treatment for alcoholism is certainly not sitting in a circle and complaining about your day and drinking coffee and putting a dollar in the basket. That's not treatment for alcoholism. The treatment for alcoholism is actually doing what's in *How it Works and Into Action*. Most of the criticism leveled at AA by people who went to meetings for a short time looking for a solution comes from believing that meetings are an AA program. Many see the sharing as lacking in substance and then go away. To read and share about the program is not by any means doing it.

It has been described to us that the alcoholic insanity is being in the twelve-step program and not taking the twelve steps. And that's kind of a good explanation for alcoholic insanity. In the Twelve and Twelve, it states "instincts balk at investigation". We're about to start looking at our instincts in step four. Many alcoholics will do anything except the actual work of recovery and it's crazy. Let's say you were diagnosed with lung cancer and you go into the doctor and the doctor says, "It's really bad news. You're going to live anywhere between six months and two years. It will get progressively worse and you're going to die a really bad death." That's basically what you could tell a low-bottom alcoholic. And you go to the doctor and say, "Well, Doctor, isn't there anything? Isn't there anything?" And they say, "Well, out in Eugene, Oregon, there's this clinical trial underway where there are twelve procedures being applied and everyone that's undergone those twelve procedures has recovered." You would sell your house, you would sell your family, you'd take a leave of absence from work. You'd get in the car and you would drive to Eugene, Oregon, and you would get involved. That would be your absolute highest priority – recovery from lung cancer, because you're going to die if you don't. There would be an incredible sense of urgency. The thing with alcoholism is, it's almost inherent in the illness, a lack of urgency. Okay, I'm going to die an alcoholic death unless I get involved and then you just barely get involved and everything else in your life is more important. If we didn't have alcoholic insanity, we would have a sense of urgency about these steps that would look the same as one you would have with cancer. We would take a leave of absence from work. We would move out of the house because people are talking to us and getting in our way, and we would get about the business of getting through these steps as thoroughly and as quickly as possible, because we would have a sane sense of urgency. But with alcoholism, inherent in the illness is a lack of urgency.

It affects almost everybody, that's why so many people die. There's a solution. There's a treatment for alcoholism. The problem is people don't take it seriously and people don't actually do it. That's the big problem. So, even in the twelve step fellowships, you find the majority of people not taking the steps. It's unbelievable. It would be like going to the hospital to get treatment for that lung disease, and instead of going into the operating room, sitting in the waiting room and talking to other people with lung cancer. "Oh, how's your lung cancer? Oh my lung cancer is a bitch, I've got problems with my lung cancer"...and not going into the operating room. Well, the operating room is the steps. So, wouldn't you be crazy if you went to the hospital and just sat in the operating room? They would call out the psych unit on you..."Hey, there's a guy who needs treatment for lung cancer in the waiting room." Well, the rooms of the twelve-step fellowships are the waiting room. They are not the treatment for the illness.

"We thought well before taking this third step and saying the affirmation prayer." *"We found it very desirable to take this step with an understanding person such as our wife, best friend or spiritual advisor. But it is better to meet God alone than with one who might misunderstand."* Remember this book was written and they were expecting it to be shipped out and people were to find recovery by reading and doing what was in this book. There were only two meetings when this book was written. One was in Akron and one was in New York, so they were giving you instructions to find somebody to do your fifth step with, not thinking that there's thousands of twelve step meetings and five hundred available sponsors in your town like there is today.

*"The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation. This was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once. Next we launched out into a course of vigorous action, the first step of which was a personal house-cleaning, which many of us had never attempted."* Next, what does next mean? The next thing, doesn't it? Launched...launched...we have a really good friend who is an airline pilot and we asked him one time, "What does launched mean?" He said, "Launched means going from zero to two hundred in a matter of feet." That's what launched means. Launched means, not only next, but let's get going with some real momentum. So, after we do the third step prayer, next we launch into...so you get up off your knees from the third step prayer and you're taking inventory. That's what this is directing us to do. A lot of times, you hear, "There's no time limit on the steps" and "You take your time" and "You don't take the steps, they take you"...you hear all kinds of crazy things today when it concerns the steps. What the book is telling us is, right after making the affirmation prayer, next we launch out into a course of vigorous action, the personal house-cleaning. *"Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face and be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us."* We are going to assume that this sentence is true. Though our decision, in the third step, and our prayer, is a vital and crucial step, it's not going to have any permanent effect unless you at once, right after the prayer, get involved in a strenuous effort to face and be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. And we will say that that's not only true for the fourth step, but that's true from the fourth step through step nine. Because the process of four through nine is about being rid of the things that are blocking us, and we don't think that truly happens until we're done with our amends.

*"Our liquor was but a symptom so we had to get down to the causes and conditions."* Think about this, our liquor is only symptom of alcoholism. It's not a good one, it's a really bad one, but it's only a symptom. We drink because we're

alcoholic. We're not alcoholic because we drink.

We need to get down to the causes and conditions of our alcoholism. We need to see what's really going on. If it's not really the booze, the booze is just a symptom, what are the causes and conditions of our alcoholism? Why do I drink? Why do I have problems in my life? Why is my life unmanageable? *"Therefore we started upon a personal inventory."* This was step four. *"A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking up commercial inventory is a fact-finding and fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock in trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsaleable goods to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values."* When Bill uses construction references or business references in this book, you can be sure that the same exact sets of circumstances or instructions are applicable to the spiritual recovery process. We need to be fact-finding and fact-facing about the things that are in our nature that are damaged, that are unusable, that are defective. We need to find out exactly what they are and we need to then participate in the removal of those negative characteristics.

*"We did the exact same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure."* A lot of times the alcoholic still thinks that they're not a failure. But let's look at it this way...is your life all that you wanted it to be? Have you achieved everything that you've wanted? Are you truly happy? Is there serenity in your life? Are your personal relationships in order? And if you say no, then you've failed at really what you wanted. *"Being convinced that self manifested in various ways was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations."*

Selfishness and self-centeredness is the root of the alcoholic's problem. *"Being convinced that self manifested in various ways is what had defeated us"*. If you're not convinced that self, the manifestation of self has been what your problem is, you need to go back into the book and find out what you missed. What have you missed and why are you still unconvinced? Because up to this point, it's given us enough ammunition to directly look at our own personal experience, to come to the conclusion that selfishness and self-centeredness is what had defeated us. It's why we've failed at life. It's why we have defective relationships. It's why we have most of our emotional difficulties. *"One of the common manifestations of self is resentment. Resentment is the number one offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else."* Notice it doesn't say booze destroys more alcoholics than anything else. It says resentment does. *"From it stem all forms of spiritual disease. For we've not only been mentally and physically ill, we've been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically."* So it's pointing us to what we need to work on. We need to work on our spiritual condition, because if we work on our spiritual condition, our mental and physical condition will come into place.

So often we try to work on our physical condition. We know many alcoholics that used to exercise like crazy because they thought that's how they keep in control and get better. We know a lot of alcoholics who read all kinds of books and go to therapy and psychological counseling and believe they are working on their alcoholism mentally. And that doesn't work either. You can't go to therapy and treat your alcoholism. You can treat problems other than alcohol and find out more about your human condition but therapy is ineffective on alcoholism. Exercise is ineffective on alcoholism. However, working on your spiritual condition is. That's how you overcome alcoholism.

*"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper."* Here is where the instructions start. The best way to use this book is, when you use an instruction, go do the instruction. Don't keep reading. This is a textbook. So if it says put down your resentments on paper...*"we listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry..."* Stop. Do what it just said. List the people, institutions and principles with whom you are angry. Don't go any further until you've actually done that. That's how you use this book as a textbook. *"We asked ourselves why we were angry."* That's another instruction. Ask yourself why you are angry, put that down next to the people, institutions and principles...don't go any further until you're done with that. We have put forms to use at the end of this chapter.

*"In most cases, it was found that our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships, including sex, were hurt or threatened. So we were sore, we were burned up."* We see that column number three is where we list "what does it affect". Where you get the information for column number three is in the sentence we just covered. Self-esteem...pocketbook, that would be your finances...ambitions...personal relationships, including sex – sex relationships, were hurt or threatened so we were hurt or sore. We were burned up.

Think about this for a minute. You're angry at somebody. The only way you can be angry at a person, an institution or principle is if you think that something you have will be taken away or something you want to get will be interfered with – you won't be able to get what you want. So instincts are what I have and I'm going to protect it. Ambitions are what I want to get. Now if your instincts or ambitions are not harmed, threatened or interfered with, there's nothing to be angry about. So this is an exercise in breaking down your resentment or your anger to see what areas of self are being affected. Is it your self-esteem? Is it your sex relations? Is it your money? Are they being harmed, threatened or interfered with, what you have or what you want? Now you're not going to have resentment unless one of those things is affected. So the exercise is to write it down.

*"On our grudge list, we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions, our personal sex relations which had been interfered with? We were usually as definite as this example."* Now this is Bill's very rudimentary inventory that's broken down on page 65 and we will go through some of these. "I am resentful at..." that's column number one. "The cause," that's column number two..."Affects my" is column three. Let's just look at Mr. Brown. I'm resentful of Mr. Brown "because of his attention to my wife. That's one resentment; the second one is, "told my wife of my mistress". Okay, that's the second one. The third one is, Brown may get my job at the office.

If somebody was trying to hit on your wife, was telling your wife that you're having an affair, and trying to get your job, you're going to be upset. Let's see why you're upset. It's affecting your sex relations, it's affecting your self-esteem; it's making you afraid. If you look in column number three, security, self-esteem, sex relations and fear are being affected. Let's look at Mrs. Jones. There's two ways he does this. The first way he says, "I'm resentful of Mr. Brown" and then he lists three resentments. In Mrs. Jones, he lists out what he is resentful at and he only uses one third column. So in the first example, he uses three different third columns. In the second example, he uses only one. If you have a resentment towards somebody and it's multiple resentments, you can either list out how it affects you just once or you can list out how it affects for each specific resentment. Many of us have found it better to list out each resentment separately, with separate third columns.

*"Mrs. Jones, she's a nut. She snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. She's a gossip"*. That's why he's upset with Mrs. Jones. It affects his personal relationships, his self-esteem, and fear is bracketed. Let's look at my employer. My employer... *"The cause is unreasonable, unjust, overbearing, threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account"*. Why does it affect him? Because it affects his self-esteem, fear and security. Bill could have added pocketbook as well.

The fourth resentment... *"my wife misunderstands and nags"*. *"Likes Brown, wants house put in her name"*. In column number three, what it affects is *pride, personal, sex relations, security and fear*. Notice that he didn't do a whole lot of writing. This is something that they would do very quickly back in the day. As a matter of fact, when Doctor Bob was taking you through the steps, he was writing out your inventory. He didn't even want you to be the one to do it. When you see people doing fourth steps today, you see life stories and they want to write down every detail. You don't need to do that. You just need sound bites. You need to get to the cause and condition. The more writing, the more justification you're going to put in there, the more you're going to be showing how much others contributed to the resentment, "Well, this is really why I have this." When you look at this example, it's short, it's sweet. He's getting right to the point and that's a good lesson that should be learned as far as fourth steps. We have seen people do fifth steps that were eighteen hours long. There was an economy of the process that they used.

You can get to the point with a lot less writing than a lot of people use these days. When someone writes out their life story it's a misunderstanding of the instructions or a manifestation of ego. The bigger the fourth step, the bigger the ego sometimes. Sometimes you really need to give people specific instructions before you send them off to do a fourth step. The first fourth step the author ever did, the guy who was guiding him through said, "Go do a fourth step." He didn't give him any instructions. So he did a life story because he had learned that in treatment. That's not really what it's about. We're looking for the causes and conditions of our failure at life. We're not looking to justify it. We're not looking to do a dissertation on it.

*"We went back through our lives. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty."* So you need to be thorough and you need to be honest. *"When we were finished, we considered it carefully. The first thing apparent was this world and its people were often quite wrong. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. The usual outcome was that people continued to wrong us and we stayed sore. Sometimes it was remorse and then we were sore at ourselves. But the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got. As in war, the victor only seemed to win. Our moments of triumph were short-lived."* If we have resentment, it's like drinking poison and expecting somebody else to die. It's eroding our spiritual condition and we could drink and we could die. We need to be rid of these resentments and if you're sure that you have a justified resentment you're going to die. Would you rather be right or would you rather survive?

So, we need to be rid of these resentments and the best way we have found is figuring out exactly what they are, finding out the truth about them and then moving through the rest of the steps. *"It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these do we squander the hours that might have been worthwhile."* Some alcoholics wake up in the morning, pull their head off the pillow and start thinking about the people they hated. They would start thinking about the people that did them wrong. That's a bad way to start a day.

It tarnishes your quality of life, if you can survive it. *"But with the alcoholic whose hope is the maintenance and growth of the spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal"*. There are no justified resentments. There are only fatal ones. *"For when harboring such feelings, we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the spirit"* and it's the sunlight of the spirit that keeps us safe and protected from the next drink. *"The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die. If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us."* One of the great things when you are going through this book is to use a period dictionary because the definitions of words change. Grouch, everybody knows what a grouch is...that's somebody that's cranky all the time. But what a brainstorm meant back in the late 30's, was losing your mind emotionally, punching the holes in the wall, kicking the doors down, driving around with road rage...that's a brainstorm.

*"They may be the dubious luxury of normal men but for alcoholics these things were poison."* Now we've done the first three columns, it now tells us, *"We turn back to the list for it held the key to the future. We were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, the wrongdoing of others, fancied or real, had the power to actually kill."* We found some of our resentments were fancied and some were real when we finally started writing out these resentments. We found the ones that were fancied were in our head. The people weren't out to do us wrong. Sometimes there was no truth to the offence.

*"How could we escape? We saw that these resentments must be mastered but how? We could not wish them away any*

*more than alcohol. This was our course.*" Now before you move onto column number four, this is what you need to do. *"We realized that the people who had wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way those disturbed us, like ourselves, they were sick too."* Like ourselves, this is an important perspective to have, like ourselves, we also are spiritually sick.

That is the key, this is the place where many of us find freedom from these resentments. This particular paragraph has allowed us to continue our day after a seemingly bad experience. Because our problems are of our own making, so definitely we are spiritually sick. When the author's daughter was born, he was in the hospital room with his wife at the time and she was going through contractions. And the contractions started to get really bad. And finally she went through a contraction from hell, and she looked at him and she started screaming. She said things to him, like "I am never...this is your fault! I am never going to let you touch me again! You're a this..... and you're a that.....!" Do you think he was mad at her? No, he was going, "Now, honey, breathe, breathe. It's okay." He didn't take it seriously. He knew she was in unbelievable pain. He knew she didn't mean what she said. They're asking us to look at people as if they're spiritually sick, as if they're like his wife who was having a baby and was cussing at him with everything she had. We're supposed to have some compassion. We're supposed to see that they're not all there. They're not spiritually sound. We should have compassion. We should look at them like they're sick people. And that's how we should react instead of getting resentful, believing that we're under attack.

Now here's the prayer. Before you move on to the fourth column, you need to say this prayer. *"We ask God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended, we said to ourselves, 'This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry.' Thy will be done."* Now when you have resentment, this is the resentment prayer. You figure out what areas of self are affected, why you're getting angry, and then you say, "God, please show me how to be tolerant, have pity and patience on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God, save me from being angry. Thy will be done." It's a prayer that we need to learn and we need to start using when we get angry. These resentments must be mastered, why, because they're fatal and that's an important reason.

*"We avoid retaliation or argument. We wouldn't treat sick people that way. If we do, we destroy our chances of being helpful. We cannot be helpful to all people but at least God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one. Referring to our list again, putting out of our minds the wrongs other had done..."* There's a line of demarcation here now. Yes, you've looked at why you think you're angry and what the affected areas of self are, but you've just said this prayer. Now you need to forget about their involvement. You need to look at your mistakes.

*"Referring to our list again, putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely look for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?"* Those are the four things you look for in column number four of the resentment inventory. And if you've been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened, you need to write it out. And that's how you do a resentment inventory. *"Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults, we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."*

If you need a pre-written form, you can find them at the end of this chapter. But you can just take out a notebook and start following these instructions too. How long a fourth step does take? It takes about two weeks and three hours, or it takes about two months and three hours, or it takes about two years and three hours. If you follow the book's instructions, it takes about three hours for normal people. Some people may have more resentments, more sex harms than others, but it'd be surprising if you're just following these instructions you can't do it in three hours. Listen, there's something to say about life stories, about doing a lot of writing. You get some good things out of doing those. It's like journaling, just, don't mistake that for working an AA program.

If the treatment center tells you to write a life story, that's really a first step prep. That's not a fourth step. And you get out of those exercises what you get out of those exercises. The important thing to remember is what you get out of the twelve-step exercises in the book Alcoholics Anonymous is to a state of recovered from alcohol, and that's important because Alcoholism is a progressively fatal illness. Sometimes we don't really understand what's going on with us. We're asleep, thinking we're awake. And a lot of times, we learn a lot from this. We learn a lot about ourselves. Blaming somebody for something is not how you get free. Taking responsibility for your own part in it is how you get free.

#### How It Works 4

Recovery really is a continuum. It goes from active alcoholism or active drug addiction to long-term contented and happy sobriety and recovery. But usually in the beginning part of that continuum, many of us have to be exposed to treatment, detox or therapeutics of one kind or another. A lot of this stuff didn't even exist back in the 1930s. As one person said it, we didn't have alcoholics back then. We had drunks.

We talked about the fourth step inventory processes. In the first three steps, we come to the conclusion that we're powerless over alcohol, we've got a mind that will take us back to alcohol and a body that will ensure it kills us. We come to believe that there may be a power that we can access, and this book is pretty clear that that power is God. In the third step, we make a decision to try to access that power. We understand that without some power in our lives, we're going to stay revolving in the alcoholic web and we're not going to see the light of day just because we want to or need to. There's

got to be a power that we don't possess that can we access for a recovery, so in the third step, we make a decision to access that power.

That decision is then followed by a commitment and that commitment is the action we take in the steps. In the fourth step, the first thing we need to do is identify what's our problem. What's wrong with us? Why do we keep shooting ourselves in the foot? What's the exact nature of the issues, the defects of character, the flaws in our make-up that continue to plague us, and ensure that we're never going to get anywhere. We need to inventory those and identify them. So, there's a resentment inventory. That deals with our anger. That deals with our hatred. That deals with our resentment. And we look at the nature of resentment. And each of us are specifically asked to do writing on certain aspects of the resentment, what it affects, what's the nature of self that causes these resentments. Then we're to look at our mistakes and faults. And there always is some. Then we looked at the fear inventory. We looked at why we had anxiety, trepidation, a sense of impending doom. Why are we handicapped by this sense of, "we can't deal...it's going to go wrong". The future is uncertain and scary.

We need to look at that, so the object of the inventory is to closely examine the nature of fear and why we have it, and all through these inventories are prayer directives. Because we've turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, we need to have God as part of this inventory process and ask at certain points for certain things.

We're now looking at the sex inventory, the conduct inventory with an emphasis on sex...where have we caused harm. *"Now, about sex...many of us needed an overhauling there."* Now, that's a pretty strong statement. If you know anything about mechanics you may know this answer, what is an overhauling? Let's say you need to overhaul your pick-up truck, what is that? When our pick-up truck needs an overhaul, it means that it needs to be rebuilt down almost to scratch and almost totally rebuilt. So, as an alcoholic, if our sex conduct and our intimate lives needs an overhauling, that means we need to rebuild this from the ground up. We've been running on selfishness and self-centeredness. We've made decisions based on self which later placed us in a position to be harmed. We've harmed people coming from a foundation of selfishness and self-centeredness, so we need to honestly go back and look at our intimate relationships.

We don't believe that this inventory is only for people we've been sexually intimate with. We think that it's quite appropriate for certain friendships, even certain family members and where there's a close bond with someone. It would do us well to inventory these relationships in the way it lays it out because we need to see how we're showing up. How are we showing up out in the world? If we were showing up in a really great way, we'd be doing a whole lot better than we are right now.

If you are walking for the next two years because of a DUI, or you are on thin ice with the family and the employer, then we're not doing real well. It's a difficult concept to get, that you are your own problem. An inventory process is about showing you on paper that your problems are not coming at you, they're coming from you. After you take responsibility for things that you find in this inventory, that sets the stage for some serious progress. It sets the stage for recreating your life with God's help. So when they talk about sex, it says, *"Above all, we try to be sensible on this question. It is so easy to get way off track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes, absurd extremes perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation. Then we have those voices who cry for sex and more sex, who bewail the institution of marriage, who think that most troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes."*

*"They do not have enough of it or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't".* Here's the important part...*"what can we do about them?"* This paragraph is saying we're not looking for a high moral judgment as far as the act of sex is concerned. It says in here that we let God be the ultimate judge, but what we need to do is get down to the causes and conditions of why is this behavior is harming us, why is this harming others. Bill didn't think it would be useful for people to believe that after an inventory you are become completely abstinent as far as sex is concerned, to become completely celibate, nor should we become absolutely free and loose with it.

What we need to do is we need to bring God into our sex conduct. It says that we do not want to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct, so as far as what type of sex someone has, or who they have it with, we're not the arbiters of that. But what we want to do is bring you back to the question of where is this causing harm, because it's the harm that generates the guilt, the shame and the remorse. The guilt, the shame and the remorse cause our spiritual condition to erode. And it's by having an eroded spiritual condition that brings us back to drinking alcohol.

We need to really look deeply into these relationships, figuring out what we've done wrong and then moving forward. So it's a very constructive inventory. It's not a moral judgment. Let's instead figure out where it hasn't worked in the past. If there's no overt harm being caused by your behavior, you're almost automatically moral. And it doesn't necessarily mean that you can't have relationships with people or you can't enjoy sex. You just need to do it more on God's terms than coming from a foundation of selfishness and self-centeredness.

What thing that we have seen in certain support groups is every once in awhile there will be predators. There will be people who are going to the meetings and finding an attractive, susceptible newcomer, someone that can have sex with because they are very involved in multiple sexual experiences. They'll come in and they'll prey on the newcomer. They'll tell the newcomer whatever they need to hear to be able to get into an intimate relationship with them. That is about the quickest way for someone to relapse, if they're really an alcoholic. Because if we continue to cause harm out there – it's very specific in this inventory – if we continue to cause harm out there, we're going to drink if we're really an alcoholic. Every once in awhile there will be predators that last for years in the support group meetings. They are not alcoholic or

they are not drug addicts because this process makes very clear that if you continue to make harm to others, you're going to get drunk. So if you don't get drunk, you're obviously not an alcoholic and you're in the rooms with a specific agenda. And people should understand that, be aware of that, and maybe we're not the arbiters of anyone's sex conduct but we can certainly try to protect the newcomer. They're supposedly under our care at certain points, especially when we're working with them, and you'll see the good sponsors or spiritual advisors warning against either preying on people or against people that might prey on them.

So that's not really arbitrating sexual conduct. That's just coming clear out of the book about the harm that can be caused. Here's the directive for the inventory. This is what it tells us to do on paper. It says, "*We've reviewed our own conduct through years past.*" What many of us will do as we're taking somebody through the steps is say, "Listen, write a couple of paragraphs on each specific instance. You're going to have some guilt. You ask God to help you put down the people you need to put down on this inventory, and people are going to come to you." So do a short review of the relationship. It asks you to do that. "*We reviewed our conduct over the years past.*"

Now here are three questions. "*Where had we been selfish, dishonest, and inconsiderate?*" Notice it says where. It's doesn't say were. So if we were in a relationship, remember we need a complete overhauling, we've been selfish. We've been dishonest and we've been inconsiderate, whether we think so or not. So look at where you were and then you write that down. That's question one, two and three after the review. Then it says, "*Whom did we hurt?*" That's question number four. Now in this question, who did we hurt, obviously we've hurt the person, they're at the top of the harms list. However, there's collateral damage in these relationships. We might have hurt their parents. We might have hurt their spouses. We might have hurt their children, in this completely self-centered, in need of overhauling type of relationship. There's going to be collateral damage. We list those people out. Then it asks, "*Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness?*" Most of the time, we do. A lot of us use sex as a weapon or we're trophy hunters, or it makes us feel like we're more of a man if we have a longer record, and a lot of times, when you're operating from that platform, you're going to cause jealousy. You're going to cause suspicion. You're going to cause bitterness. Maybe we use sex as a bartering tool. But that's not why God gave us the sex instinct. God gave us the sex instinct for 2 reasons. One of them is we need that instinct for the race to survive. So if we didn't want to do it, we wouldn't do it and there wouldn't be any children and mankind would have died out. So God made it enjoyable. God made us want to do it and God made it enjoyable. Those are God-given aspects of our sexuality. We complicate it coming from a place of selfishness, deciding that we want it on our terms. It doesn't matter if it's going to hurt anybody, or if it's considerate of other people. We want it the way we want it, when we want it, and that's where self comes in. If God was directing our sex conduct, it's not like we wouldn't get any sex. It would be of a better quality and cause less harm.

So, selfishness, self-centeredness, that's the root of our troubles. So, we look at where we've aroused jealousy, suspicion or bitterness. That's questions five, six, and seven. Number it out on a piece of paper. Write it out. Then it says, where were we at fault? That would be question number eight. What should we have done instead; that would be question number nine. Notice that it says, what should we have done instead? Not what could we have done instead. What could we have done instead? Probably nothing because we were being driven by a hundred forms of selfishness, fear, resentment and self-seeking.

We might have been doing the best we could at that point of time because we were a prey to our character defects and we were caught up in an alcoholic struggle that we didn't fully understand. So maybe we couldn't have done anything better but what should we have done instead? And you write out. Maybe I should have been honest with that woman instead of making her believe that there was a possibility of a long-term relationship and then dumping her twenty-four hours after the fact. Maybe I should have been honest about my feelings, it might be as simple as that. It might be as complicated as, what I should have done is invite God into every one of my relationships, and operate. I should be interested in the way He would have me be and do what He would have me do. We're now getting access to the power of God as we go through these steps.

There may be totally consensual recreational sex out there, but in most of our experience, emotions are involved. It's an intimate action. We're instinctually monogamous on a number of levels, especially women. And if we operate outside the parameters that we were designed as human beings to operate, there's going to be collateral damage. There's collateral damage and if we continue to perpetuate that collateral damage, that puts our spiritual condition in peril and we can drink. And for us, to drink is to die.

So, it's vitally important that we get this under control. It says, "*We get this all down on paper and we looked at it.*" So after the inventory, after it's all down on paper, study it. Do some meditation on it. You need to really see what kind of patterns evolved within your own conduct with others.

"*In this way, we tried to shape a sane and sound ideal for our future sex life. We subjected each relationship, each of the inventories, to this test. Was it selfish or not?*" And ninety percent of the time, all of them are going to be selfish. We now put together the attributes we believe are the ones God would want for us. Now we write down the attributes that we would like to show up at the next party with, or the attributes that we would like to bring the special person or persons in our life. How do we want to show up?

Now, this is a prayer directive. "*We asked God to mold our ideals and help us live up to them.*" So after we've put down our ideal, using what we've already seen what doesn't work. We've seen what happens when we're operating from a foundation of selfishness and self-centeredness. Obviously, we've seen the destructive nature of some of these things doing the inventory. So we put down attributes; we put down the way we want to be perceived, the way we want to interact with others. We write that down as an ideal. Here's a great promise that's not in the book, you attract what you

are. If you're a miserable, conniving, fanatical, insane individual, that's usually the type of people you're going to be attracting. So if you're very selfish in your relationships, you're going to attract very selfish people or very codependent people as the case may be. If you get to a point where you are really healthy, and really spiritual and God is really working through your life, that's the type of person who is going to become attracted to you. It's important for us to improve, we're in the middle of a complete rebuild; we want to put it all back together correctly so that we're not causing harm and we're getting some real value out of our intimate relationships. *"We remembered that always, that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly, nor to be despised or loathed."* Whatever our sex ideal, turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. Remember we're asking God to help mold our ideals and help us live up to them. That can be part of your Morning Prayer ritual if you want.

*"We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided we do not bring about still more harm in so doing."* A lot of times the amends that revolve around our sex conduct have to be approached very carefully. You can't cause other harms. You also can't blankly admit to every impropriety in the world to somebody and crush them emotionally in doing so. You have to be very careful with these amends when you get to this part of this process. We will see very clearly how to make those amends in step nine. It's not something that you want to run right out and do right after a fourth step. You need some guidance. You need a lot more work with God. It's a real good idea to be going through this with someone that's experienced and to not run off making amends to your last thirteen girl or boyfriends right after inventory.

Sometimes when we have a conflict, we've caused harm and we come to the place where we realize we need to take care of that, we go out full bore. We want to get rid of that problem now. We don't want to have any issues. Let's take care not to rush into this without tact and common sense; some people just aren't ready to hear it yet. We are not sweeping off our side of the street and then pushing it over on our neighbor. We need to be considerate of others. We need to show restraint sometimes. We need to be specific about placing other people's welfare ahead of our own. Yes, we should make amends, but we need to think very clearly with these sex harms amends, whether or not it's going to cause someone more suffering for us to approach them than not.

*"In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem. In meditation we ask God what we should do about each specific matter."* If we're turning our will and our lives over to the care of God and then we're seeking through prayer and meditation to improve our contact with God, asking for God to be our director, our principle and our father, there needs to be some communication back and forth. Prayer is easy to understand. The meditative practices are vital also, because sometimes it's in meditation that the answers come to us. With very few people, does God speak in the first person.

Usually we have to divine God's will through our intuitive capacity, through other people's guidance and wisdom. What the Oxford Group members would do is sit in meditation. They would ask a question and they would wait for guiding thoughts. They would write them down on a piece of paper, then they would check them with the four absolutes. These are absolute purity, is this thought or this decision or this action absolutely pure? Is it absolutely selfless? Is it absolutely honest? Is it absolutely loving? And if it was a yes to all of those, they would believe that to be a guided thought and they would act on it.

There's a wonderful pamphlet, called How to Talk to God, that was published back in the 30s by Oxford Group members that speaks to how they did it. That was kind of left out of the big book. It was left more open how to communicate with God, but that's how they did it back then. More has been revealed. There's religious practices that have specific disciplines about how you do this and all of those are well and fine. But what you need to be seeking from the spirit part of your nature the right thought or the right action in each of these things. The right answer will come if we want it. If God's running my sex life, I may never get any action! You'll hear that from a newcomer. No, the action that you're going to get is going to be more God-directed, more substantial and more intimate than anything you've had before. That's what you come to find out when you do this.

One of the issues that is very damaging in recovery fellowships is when people want to give opinions based on experiences that they've never had. You go into a step meeting and you'll hear people, one after another, sharing their opinion on certain steps. Our experience living the steps trumps opinion because if you haven't done the steps, you don't know what they're going to be about. You've only got an opinion on an experience you've never had. So many people want to argue with those who have experience with a step, "Well, that can't possibly be true." "Well, have you ever done this step?" "Well, no, but it still can't possibly be true." We are asked to share our experience, strength and hope, yet people will have problems with that because they've got some preconceived notion about what this process involves and they've never experienced it so it's a bizarre preconception about this process. And sometimes they don't even know. How do you know what you don't know? Experiencing it is what this whole thing is about.

When a lot of people read a lot of books and go to a lot of step meetings, what they're doing is they're collecting signs. The signs aren't important. What's important is where the signs point to. You see that so often. This commentary is important only if it can help convince or motivate someone into gaining their own personal experience with this work. If you do these things, there's a series of promises that are going to come true. They're remarkable promises and they beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start, because it could mean the difference between your life and your death. But it's certainly going to mean the difference between living a very satisfactory life and living a very unsatisfactory life. That's what this process really offers.

*"God alone can judge our sex situation. Counsel with others is often desirable but we let God be the final judge. We realize that some people are as fanatical about sex as others are loose. We avoid hysterical thinking or advice."* Now,

here's a warning. There are wonderful promises and then there's reverse promises. These warnings are saying if you don't follow these directions, this is what they promise you. *"Suppose we fall short of the chosen ideal and stumble. Does this mean we're going to get drunk?"* Every once in a while, we're going to know the right thing to do and we're just not going to do it.

We're going to fall short in word, thought and deed every day. We don't use that as an excuse to continue our bad behavior, but sometimes we're going to stumble. *"Does this mean we're going to get drunk? Some people tell us so, but this is only a half-truth. It depends on us and on our motives. If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire to let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson. If we are not sorry, and our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink. We are not theorizing; these are facts out of our experience."* This is why we believe when there are people who have run into the fellowship rooms preying on the people who haven't really gotten a chance to get on their feet and they don't get drunk, they're not alcoholic to begin with. They're in the wrong rooms anyway and they're there for their own particular agenda. Because if you're really alcoholic and you continue to use your sex power, your charm and magnetism, to lure people into the bedroom before they have a chance to heal, you're going to get drunk. We have seen this happen countless times. We have warned people over and over and every once in awhile we get somebody that we are working with who just doesn't listen. We can then almost set a clock to them taking another drink. So, if you really want to get over the drinking problem, take this stuff seriously. We're not the arbiters, what we're there for is to show them if their actions continue to cause harms, they're going to drink. Does it mean they're never going to get action again? No. What it means is that they have to be considerate of others. Remember the third step prayer and remember the seventh step prayer? Those prayers really weren't for us, they were to fit ourselves to be of maximum benefit to God and other people, because that's the solution to alcoholism, living life along spiritual lines instead of along selfish lines.

Do you want to overcome alcoholism? Do you want the problem to be removed? Do you want to be at a place safe and protected from the next drink or drug or don't you? These are facts out of our experience. They're not theories. We don't need to get involved in a very intimate or detailed level with an individual, except to make sure that they're clear on the fact that they can't continue to cause harms. Because we don't have the luxury as alcoholics to do that, normal people may but we don't. We also don't have the luxury to drink. If you don't accept that, if you don't take responsibility for that, you aren't going to make it.

To sum up about sex, here's a prayer directive. *"We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and the strength to do the right thing."* So that's a prayer directive. You need to be praying....when it says to pray, part of working this program is to be saying these prayers. If you want to raise your hand and say, "I'm working the program," you better be saying these prayers. Otherwise don't say you're working a program because that's part of the program.

*"If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others."* Where we've been heartbroken or where we've got unrequited love, time and time again, working with others and trying to help them will save us. So if we're embroiled in romantic difficulties, what we're supposed to do is to just stop and move on to an alcoholic that we can help. That works. Sometimes trying to keep those relationships going is not something that's going to work. *"If we're helping others, we think of their needs and we think of them. This takes us out of ourselves, it quiets the imperious urge when to yield would mean heartache."* Now, here are the promises that they put up on the wall at many support group meetings. You ever been to a support group meeting, Monty, where they've got the twelve promises up on the wall? It really is short-changing a group to put these up on the wall. Every action step has a series of absolutely wonderful promises that follow it. These are the promises that come from the fourth step. *"If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we've written down a lot. We've listed and analyzed our resentment. We've begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their destructiveness."* *"We've begun to learn tolerance, patience and goodwill toward all men, even our enemies, for we look upon them as sick people. We've listed the people we have hurt by our conduct and are willing to straighten out the past if we can."*

It says we start to look at them as sick people, the people that we really hate. We try to perceive somebody as being not right, like it's not their fault. If we can say to ourselves, "they're not doing it to me; they're just doing it." We don't feel like we're under attack. We just see somebody who may not be as spiritually advanced as they might be. We're all on this planet to learn spiritual lessons and to grow in understanding and communion with our creator. We think that's why we're here, and some of us are a little further on than others. So if we look upon somebody as not being as far along the spiritual path as they might be, we can look on it with compassion instead of resentment. We can look on it like, "well, they're just acting out" instead of "they're attacking me." It's a shift in perception.

*"In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves."* There's a wonderful promise, too. Faith will do for us what we can't do for ourselves

*"We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning."* So what's a fourth step? It's a beginning; you've identified the problems pretty well. You've engaged God in this process. You see where you've been destructive and caused harm, but that's just a beginning. For the removal of those, to be able to really start living life along spiritual lines, you need to continue to go further. *"That being so, you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."*

We need to remember that if we alone could remove our charter defects or our alcoholism, we would be doing a whole lot better than we are right now, wouldn't we? The mind is the problem. We feel that the problem lies in our mind. So our

mind tries to heal our mind. Doctors don't work on themselves. They go to other doctors. The craziest thing that you'll hear from an alcoholic is, "I'm going to do it better next time", or "It won't happen again" or "I've learned my lesson". We'll say that and sometimes we'll even believe it and mean it, but the fact of the matter is we're caught up in a struggle called alcoholism and without help; it is too much for us. But there is one who can relieve us of that obsession and that one is God. May you find Him now.

So, again, this is not a self-help program. This is an accessing the power of God program. Make no mistake about it. We sometimes find the book Alcoholics Anonymous in the self-help section. There are recovery sections in bookstores now and it's more appropriate to put it here, but there really isn't a category for this. Now every once in a while, some of us get into deep discussions with some of our European friends who are confirmed atheists. They'll tell you, "Look, I'm an atheist. I go to meetings. I've been able to stay sober" and, maybe they have. But they still suffer from guilt, shame and remorse. They still suffer from depression and anxiety and fear. They're still restless, irritable and discontented. They've not achieved recovery. They think sobriety is recovery. They don't understand that it's a complete rebuilding of one's life system. And we think if you remain an atheist, not believing in any power greater than yourself, what you're doing is chaining yourself to the starting line.

As we start this process of step work we ask "God, show me what you want me to do this time." And do it with a blank book. And each time through the work we are brought to a new understanding, a new level of awareness, a new perspective on some of these concepts, and it's a wonderful experience. Spiritual books will hit you where you are. Wherever you are spiritually, it's going to resonate and speak to you. So this is a living book.

### Into Action (Step 5)

Well, just a quick recap of where are, in the spiritual process, the recovery process, is in step one; we identified what our problem was. Our problem was that we suffer from alcoholism. Alcoholism manifests with a mental obsession that draws people back into drink, even though many, many times they've made a firm resolution not to do it again, they find themselves drinking again. It's a very strange psychic capacity to alcohol in that it doesn't matter if you want to stop drinking, it doesn't matter what the reasons are for stop drinking, it doesn't matter what the consequences are for drinking, you'll end up doing it again anyway, if you've dropped yourself down into alcoholism far enough.

That wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the physical craving, which is one drink always asks for a second, the second demands the third, the third insists on the fourth and by end stage alcoholism you end up drinking until you're unconscious. That's another part of alcoholism and that wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the fact that unmanageability manifests in your life in every single way. Problems pile up on you and become astonishingly difficult to solve. Personal relationships suffer. Your health suffers. You can't see truth or right or wrong in the ways that sane people do. So that's the problem. You come to believe that these other people who have achieved sobriety, who've achieved recovery, were able to tap into something. And you come to believe that that something is a power greater than yourself. It's the actual power of God so you need to start getting open-minded about spiritual matters, and when you do that, the next logical step is to actually make a decision to access that power.

What do I need to do to get in front of that power? I'm dying from a progressively fatal illness. Tell me what I need to do, show me. And that is step three, deciding to turn your will and your life, or your actions and your thoughts, over to the care of that power which can keep you safe and protected and help you recreate your life. Then the first real action step that they ask you to take is an inventory of the things that you're doing wrong in your life, the ways that you are falling short. How are you shooting yourself in the foot all the time? Why are you suffering so much emotionally? Why are your relationships messed up? Why aren't you out there being the best kind of human being you can possibly be? Why have you retreated into isolation? The guilt, the shame and remorse that you suffer from – you need to look at the causes and conditions of those things very, very carefully so you can see how they're operating in your life. Why you're living the wrong way. And the next step after that is, once you've put all these inventories together, once you understand your life story a little bit better, it's now time to share that with somebody.

There have been confessional religious practices for many, many years. A lot of therapists understand that getting to the truth of the matter and having someone honestly discuss what's going on with them is beneficial, but the genius of the fifth step is it gets down so deep into the causes and conditions of your life, that sharing it is really the beginning of a spiritual experience. And the endgame for the alcoholic who wants to achieve recovery, to get to the state of a recovered alcoholic, is a spiritual awakening.

So beginning that spiritual awakening with the spiritual experience of the fifth step is absolutely vital, absolutely essential. Anybody wandering around the fellowships that have never done that is kidding themselves if they even think they're alcoholic because there are so many warnings in this that if you do not do this, you will not overcome drinking. And we believe that – this comes from our own experience and our experience working with others. The people who skip this step and stay sober haven't gone down the scale to what this book would describe as a real alcoholic.

So, skipping this step is very, very dangerous. We think we're tied to our secrets; we're in bondage to the things that we're really ashamed of. We're in bondage to the guilt and the remorse that we have for some of the things that we've done. Every alcoholic is someone who suffers very, very much when they do something wrong or they hurt somebody. You probably almost have to have some type of psychosis or disorder to not feel guilt, shame or remorse, but we think it's amplified with the alcoholic. If you're a blackout drinker and you leave the house, what's going to happen is you're going

to have problems with people. You're going to do stupid things. You're going to break the law. You're going to disappoint people. You're going to rob people of emotional or financial security and then you have to deal with it when you sober up. It's a corrosive state of mind to suffer so much from the things that we do. So there needs to be a level of freedom. We need to not have to go back to those pages in our history that are not pretty. We need to find a way to be able to continue to move forward. If we're stuck in the past or we suffer from things that happened in the past, it makes it very difficult to move progressively forward into the future.

*"Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We've been trying to get a new attitude and a new relationship with our creator and to discover the obstacles in our path."* That's step three and step four, that new relationship with the creator really is the mainstay of step three. And discovering the obstacles in our path are step four. So many people think step four is just an exercise in beating oneself up, and it's really not. It's an exercise in figuring out how not to do it any more. So we're discovering the obstacles in our path. *"We've admitted certain defects. We have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is. We have put finger on the weak items in our personal inventory"* with our anger, with our fear and with the things that we've done wrong. *"Now these things are about to be cast out."* What kind of a promise is that? Anybody that's just done a fourth step and sees the whole magilla of dysfunction in their life, a promise like this is pretty severe. Now these weak items, are about to be cast out. *"But this requires action on our part which, when completed, will mean we will have admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our defects."* Again, when you write up a life story or you go to confession or you are talking to a therapist, you usually are not sharing the exact nature of your defects. You're sharing how those defects manifest. You're sharing how you're showing up out there, if you could even be that honest. So to get down to the causes and conditions or the exact nature of the defects is the genius of step four. Now you need to share what you found in step four. It's a really good idea to read what you've written, and so often people who are doing fifth steps with us want to elaborate. *"Well, let me tell you a little bit about what was going on at this time."* And a lot of times the elaboration is used to justify some of the stuff that's going on and that's not what the exercise is about. We feel its best when somebody just reads one right after another, the things they did wrong, the harms, the fears, the resentments, there's something very cathartic about that. One thing that a fourth step and a fifth step is, it's never perfect and never completed. It's like a living exercise. Yes, you do a fourth step and you do a fifth step, but you're also supposed to learn how to practice these principles in all your affairs. You're supposed to continue to take personal inventory in step ten and set right the wrongs and share with other people the things that you need to talk about. So it's really the first exercise that you do in a series of life-long exercises, if you're following this book.

Another practice some of us use is to start the fifth step off like this; *"Let's start with the thing that you decided on the way over here you weren't going to share with me."* Because every once in awhile somebody's just got some deep, dark thing and they want to hang onto it. They're so ashamed of it. And this is about bringing the end of shame. This isn't an exercise where you're going to hold onto something and continue to be ashamed about it for the rest of your life. This step is about freedom. This step is when you're ashamed of it – share it. Let's get past the shame. Let's put this behind us and get it to a point where you're never going to have to think about it again.

*"This brings us to the fifth step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter. This is perhaps difficult, especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that."* There's places in here where it will tell you that if you hold anything back you're not going to make it, and this is the first one. *"In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We'll be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reason for why we should do so."* The alcoholic always has to have a reason.

*"The best reason first...if we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking."* If we don't overcome drinking, it's going to kill us. For us, to drink is to die. So if we skip this vital step, we may die. *"Time after time, newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably, they got drunk."* What's invariably? Almost without variation is what invariably means.

*"Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is they never completed their house-cleaning. They took inventory, all right, but they hung onto some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egotism and fear. They only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary until they told someone else all their life story."* That is a really interesting sentence. Let's say we've done a pretty thorough inventory but that thing in Cincinnati...we can't share that; we might end up in prison or something. So, we're going to hang onto some of the worst items in stock. But when you do that, you may think that you've lost enough egotism and fear to be able to stay sober, but what they're saying is that you need to completely humble yourself. You need to learn enough of that type of humility. You need to learn enough of the complete fearlessness you need in sharing all this because that's what they find necessary. Then you need to tell someone your entire life story. Now, from that sentence, a lot of people have begun to think that a fourth step is a life story. A lot of treatment centers ask you to write out a life story and consider it your fourth step and sharing it your fifth step. That's really incorrect. What they mean in here is your entire life story, all the inventories. And if there are things that weren't inventoried that are really bad, that needs to be shared also.

There's a battle going on and it's been going on within humanity for thousands of years. The earlier religious people believed it was between the devil and your soul. Modern psychologists will say it's between your ego and your better self, or your spirit. There's a conflict that goes on and I think a lot of times our ego wins out and our spirit doesn't. So by making this a very, very disciplined type of step, by telling us eight times not to hold onto anything, what they're trying to

do is not let our ego, not let our negative nature or Satan win.

We need to place ourselves firmly on the side of spirit because we're spiritual beings but we have free will and the free will that we were given as a wonderful gift by God can become perverted through the selfishness and self-centeredness that we will especially as alcoholics. So, if we're going to hang onto something for a reason related to who is hearing our fifth step it tells us what to do with those, but if we're just hanging onto something because we don't want to look stupid or we don't want the person we're sharing this stuff with to think we're lame, that's not a good enough reason. We need to plow through. Otherwise it could look like this, "I don't want him to think I did that thing in Cincinnati so I'll go back to drinking". Do a complete fifth step or die an alcoholic death. Make it as black and white as that.

Sometimes our ego wants us to think that we are so bad and we did such horrible stuff but that's a manifestation of selfishness. That's a manifestation of ego. When we get through the fifth step, that's when we start to feel like we are a decent human. We have been suffering from a malady. We did not want to be like we were. It's not so bad. Some of us start to think, "Maybe I am a member of humanity. Maybe I am not such a scumbag that I thought I was," and start to rejoin the human race a little bit after doing this. And again, you can go to confession and you can go to counselors and psychologists, it's just not the same experience.

So, don't fool yourself and think that you've done it with your counselor. This really needs to be done with a sponsor, or a spiritual advisor, in the way that it's described and with the inventories being read. *"More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world, he projects his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it. The inconsistency is made worse by the things he does on his sprees. Coming to his senses, he's revolted at certain episodes he vaguely remembers. These memories are a nightmare. He trembles to think someone might have observed him. As fast as he can, he pushes these memories far inside himself. He hopes they will never see the light of day. He is under constant fear and tension and that makes for more drinking."* We would wake up in the morning and have a hazy recollection of some really embarrassing tragic insane thing we had done the night before, and had to jam that down. That was too painful for us to just stay conscious of. So we would start drinking again, rationalize the behavior or just try to forget it.

In the paragraph above, it talks about we're playing an actor. We're not being ourselves because we don't think that anybody would like our real selves. Anyone who has ever see the Woody Allen movie called Zelig would remember this. Zelig was a human chameleon and he's going through the history of the first part of the twentieth century and all of a sudden, he ends up with Nazis, and he becomes a Nazi, all of a sudden, he's with Hassidic Jews and he starts to grow a beard, he was a human chameleon,. Many of us could relate to this movie because, if we were sitting at the bar with a bunch of Republicans, we were saying, "Yeah, the Republican agenda...conservatism..." and if we were over with the Democrats, we'd be going, "Yeah, liberalism." We didn't have enough integrity to be ourselves. We cared a bit too much about what they thought about us.

*"Colleges are inclined to agree with us. We have spent thousands of dollars for examinations. We know but few instances where we have given these doctors a fair break."* We really probably are the only group that as a whole spend tens of thousands of dollars on therapy and lie to the therapist, then complain that therapy's not helping.

*"We have seldom told them the whole truth nor have we followed their advice. Unwilling to be honest with these sympathetic men, we were honest with no one else. Small wonder many in the medical profession have a low opinion of alcoholics and their chances for recovery."* The medical profession in general has a really low opinion of alcoholics because they see them in the critical stages of low-bottom alcoholism. When do the doctors see the alcoholics? They see them when their esophagi are blowing up; when they've died because their aortas have exploded; they're trying to help them fix their liver because there's cirrhosis. They're coming in with DTs and completely insane and they get really violent in the emergency rooms. Alcoholics are real good at running into the hospital saying, "Help me, help me, help me!" and then two days later they get sober and start figuring out what's wrong with the hospital. "These people aren't running this place right!"

"What do you mean I can't use the phone?" And they storm out with resentment, don't pay their bill and then come back a month later, "Help me, help me!" Of course, the doctors are going to have low opinions of the alcoholics. But the one thing we can do as people who have recovered from this hopeless state of mind and body is to let people know in the professions that we are recovered alcoholics. Treatment works in most instances, or at least in some instances. And recovery is absolutely possible. What happens today is they see us at our worst. The judges see us after we've gotten our third DUI and the doctors see us when we need medical attention. Most of these professionals really see us at a low point. And then we get sober, we never go back. We're gone; we disappear because there's no reason to see them any more

If we're not letting them know, "Hey, I'm the guy that was the complete maniac here six months ago, I trashed your ER and you threw me out of here. I just want to let you know that I'm sober now. I'm working a recovery program. And listen, I want to give you my number because recovery really does work and if there's anybody like me who comes in here please give them my number. If I can help, I will." There are not enough people that do that any more. There are not enough people that do that with judges. There are not enough people that do it with doctors. There are not enough people that do it with any number of police, any number of other professionals. And it hurts us because it perpetuates the stigma and the discrimination about alcoholism whereby everybody believes that an alcoholic never gets better. Don't ever trust them. Don't ever lend them money. If they're an alcoholic, they're never going to get better. That's just not true. Recovery is very much possible.

*"We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world."* What if that sentence is absolutely true? We must be entirely honest with somebody if we're going to live a long life and not die an alcoholic death or even be happy in this world. What if in your particular case, that statement's absolutely true? That might help to convince you to get on with the business of the fifth step.

We think that our ego, or the lesser part of our nature, wants to hide our faults because it wants us in isolation and our alcoholism wants us drunk again. But it'll settle for us dead. But I think the better part of our nature wants communion with our fellow man, wants to experience as cleanly and clearly as possible the grace and presence of God. Deep down within us, we want to be able to do this, but there's that fight between our ego and our spirit when we are sitting there sharing this fifth step stuff. And we're thinking, "I don't want to do this" and sometimes, unfortunately, our lower nature wins out. We don't share it, we don't move forward in recovery and we get drunk again. Now it's going to give us some qualifications about people who are to hear our fifth step. When this book was published, there were only a few groups of Alcoholics Anonymous, one big one in Akron, another one in New York, a couple of small ones were popping up here and there. But they really expected this book to be mailed around and this would be mail-order recovery. They expected people to get this book in the mail, open it up, use it like a textbook and get a spiritual awakening. Then go find other people to work with. That is what this book would do. In actual fact, it ended up being a textbook, yes, but it had to be taught. There was not as many recoveries by people just reading this book as there were from people carrying the message of this book.

*"Rightly and actually, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step."* Note that it says person or persons. It's not a bad idea to share your fifth step with multiple people. It even says if you're a Catholic, you must share it with a priest. That's something that people miss a lot of times. True freedom is being able to tell anybody anything about you.

*"Those of us belonging to a religious denomination that requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it." "Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion."*

We have heard a lot of people say, "Leave the poor priests alone. Do this with your sponsor." We can understand that, but you may get something a little bit different from a priest than you will from a sponsor. But we think that you need to share this fifth step with someone who has the same problem you do, alcoholism, and has done a fifth step themselves. If you're sharing something with a priest, they'll give you some spiritual direction. But when you're talking to another alcoholic, a lot of times they make it easier for you because they say, "Oh, yeah. Oh, you did that? I did that too

*"We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics. If we cannot or, rather, would not do this, we search our acquaintance for a closed-mouth understanding friend."* So being closed-mouth is essential and it's okay to ask somebody, "You're going to keep this one hundred percent confidential, correct? It's just between you and me and God." An understanding friend would best be someone who understands alcoholism. *"Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be that one of our own family, but we cannot disclose anything to our wives or parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have no right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story, we tell to someone who will understand but be unaffected. The rule is that we must be hard on ourselves but always considerate of others."*

Remember, right now, you can't shake a stick without hitting a qualified sponsor somewhere in your hometown. Back then, they really expected people to be getting this book in Albuquerque and not knowing who to share the fifth step with. Nowadays, it's a lot easier to find somebody. *"Notwithstanding the great necessity for discussing oneself with someone, it may be that one is so situated that there is no suitable person available. If that is so, this step may be postponed. Only, however, if we hold ourselves in complete readiness to go through with it at the first opportunity."* You can't use this as an excuse any more because there's just too many people around that you can share your fifth step with. . . But very rarely are you going to be able to use this as an excuse any more. *"We say this because we are very anxious that we talk to the right person. It is important that he be able to keep it confident, that he be fully able to understand and approve at what we're driving at and that he will not try to change our plan. But we must not try to use this as a mere excuse to postpone."* Someone who might try to change your plan...let's say you're sharing this and somebody just stops you..."You don't have to talk about this; I know what you're trying to say. You don't have to talk any more about it," because they don't want to hear it That's not a good, that's not the right person to hear a fifth step.

Somebody will just be horrified or something and that's usually because they're not experienced with this exercise.

*"When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk."* So the other person has to be prepared for a long talk. Don't get somebody who's going to give you twenty minutes on Thursday. And don't get somebody who's going to stop you halfway through and say, "We've covered enough. I've got a golf date." Make sure that the person that's listening to this understands the seriousness of it, that's its a life and death errand. So you really try to qualify somebody in these ways. *"We explained to our partner what we were about to do and why we had to do it."* Now that's an instruction. We would have to say, "You do understand I'm here to read my fourth step inventories to complete my fifth step, and that's what we're doing here today, and you understand why I'm here..." Sometimes they already know why you're there but it tells you to explain it to your partner. So we should do it whether the person knows why we are there or not.

*"He should realize that we are engaged in a life and death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help. They will be honored by our confidence".* And here's how we need to move into it..."we pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing,

*we are delighted.*" Here are the fifth step promises. Number one is *we're delighted*. Number two is *we can look the world in the eye*. Number three is *we can be alone at perfect peace and ease*. That's something many of us never experienced. We couldn't stand being by ourselves. We would always have to occupy ourselves in some way. *"Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel then nearness of our creator."* We begin to feel near to God. *"We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly."* Now understand that the feeling that drink problem has disappeared will come strongly. The drink problem hasn't disappeared. It just might feel that way. It's in the tenth step that the drink problem gets removed and the promises for drinking are offered. *"We feel we are on the broad highway walking hand in hand with the spirit of the universe."* Now you're done. You've laid it all out in front of someone. You've invited God into the process and you've been entirely honest. You're not done yet. The returning home part is very important for the completion of the fifth step. *"Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done."* It's a guided meditative process. We're supposed to ask ourselves certain questions about the first five steps.

But first of all, there's a prayer. *"We thank God from the bottom of our hearts that we know Him better."* That's a prayer that you're supposed to say before you take the book down from the shelf. *"We turn to the page which contains the twelfth steps, carefully reading the first five proposals"* and those proposals are on page fifty-eight, fifty-nine and sixty in the first part of How it Works. *"Carefully reading the first five proposals, we ask ourselves, have we omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk as a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"* Those construction references are all about building an arch to freedom...freedom from self, freedom from self-centeredness, freedom from alcohol, freedom from resentment, freedom from all the things that are causing our debilitation as human beings. You're to go home. You're to cover the first five steps. If there's anything that you've left out, you're to then share that. If you have not left anything out, then you're to move on to steps six and seven. There is and the tendency to short-change ourselves and to think that sobriety is about as much as I'm going to get out of this. No, it's a recovery and an absolutely wonderful way of life that's available.

Big Book study groups are great, that's where somebody will invite a half a dozen people over every Tuesday night and they'll go through the book and they'll actually take the steps together. Remarkable things are going on in groups like those.

If you go to the bar filled with alcoholics, there'll be three basic types of people. There will be the person crying in their beer and really sad and melancholy. Then there'll be the person who is very amorous, trying to pick up a member of the opposite sex. And then there will be the people who want more out of alcohol. They want more. They want to leave this bar and they want to go to the city, to a club. We think the people that get involved in the big book recoveries are those mad dogs who want more. It's okay in recovery to want more. If you want more, it's available for you. It's available in the book Alcoholics Anonymous, all you need to do is follow directions and continue to be consistent with practicing the principles.

### Into Action (Steps 6 – 8, Step 9 Part 1)

What's been happening in alcoholism treatment which is unconscionable is that for many years every other form of medical treatment or psychiatric treatment has followed outcomes. You measure a patient's progress in a number of different ways to make sure that the treatment methodology is appropriate for the client, and that there's forward momentum as far as someone getting better. Now for years in addiction treatment, you go to the twenty-eight day programs or the ninety-day programs, very rarely is there any outcomes followed. Now every other form of treatment for anything, the data is at such a granular level that you'll know whether scalpel A will give you a better survival rate than scalpel B. And the fact of the matter is, outcome measurements have been absent in addictions. People will throw you into a twenty-eight day program, then you get discharged and they don't know if it worked. They don't know what real progress you've made because there's not been an adequate measurement diagnostic as far as outcomes. Does the person respond to this? Has he stayed sober? What kind of quality of life is showing improvement? None of those things have been operative in the treatment industry. The measurements in use are usually something out of the dark ages. We hope that more and more people are going to be expected to follow outcomes for reimbursements. Still to this day the most successful recovery model is the twelve step process. It may not be measured but it's very observable. In step one, you hopefully have been able to recognize that you're either A, an alcoholic or B, not an alcoholic. It's probably in your best interest to figure out that you're not, but let's just say that you are, you know that you have a mind that will, during periods of insanity, get you back into the liquor, no matter what decisions you've made, no matter what the consequences may be. You're going to drink again because that's been your pattern and that will continue to be without some form of spiritual experience. Your body is set such that once you start drinking, you have little or no control over the amount you take and there's unmanageability presenting in your life emotionally within personal relationships, mentally, physically. There are consequences, problems are piling up on you and they're becoming astonishingly difficult to solve, and hopefully you get exposed to a recovery process somewhere and you start to believe that you can access a power greater than yourself. You can place yourself in the sunlight of that power, and that power can help you recover from alcoholism. That's the second step. Step three is coming to believe that there is a power greater than yourself; you

make a decision to access that power by going through the rest of the steps, by developing and improving a contact with God, a relationship with your higher power. Step four is really looking at where you've failed in life, the causes and conditions of your alcoholism, your behavior that's led to this problem.

What are the things about you that contribute to your alcoholism like selfishness and self-centeredness? You really start to look and see the truth about how you're showing up out there in the world. In step five, you share that with another person and with God and with yourself in a brutally honest way. And then you're poised for step six and step seven. And that's on the top of page seventy-six. Prior to the returning home part where the construction references ask you to see if you've left anything out of the first five steps. If you've left anything out of the first five steps, it will sabotage you moving forward. If you haven't been completely honest in your fifth step, you're not going to get a lot out of steps six through twelve. So it asks you to really think very, very deeply if you have been fearless, have you been thorough, with uncovering and discovering the truth about your stock in trade.

"If we can answer to our satisfaction that we haven't left anything out, that we've been as fearless and thorough as possible, we then look at step six. *We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.*" *"Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, every one? If we still cling to something, we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."*

After we've done the inventory and shared the inventory, we are at a place where, yes, we are absolutely willing to let God remove the big defects of character, like drinking, like getting arrested, like always not showing up the way we want to in our lives. We can answer yes to a lot of that stuff. However, there are layers that we need to consider. Are we going allow God in to every aspect of our life? Are we going to allow Him into our sex life? Are we going to allow Him to guide us and direct us in our business life? If there are still some things that we are not willing to put in the hands of this power greater than ourselves that can restore us to sanity, there's a prayer. Yes, I can take this step, but that doesn't mean that it's one hundred percent internalized. That doesn't mean that were one hundred percent willing to let God take everything because there are still some things that we may want to hold onto. And Bill knew there may be some things that we're not willing to let go of, like our sex life, like our business life, like the way we treat our family because we really think that we know everything that needs to be known about being a family member and we're going to keep telling these family members what they should be doing and how they should be operating. If we're not willing to let these things go, we ask God to help us be willing. And we'll say a prayer like, "God, please help me be willing to let go of the things that I'm still hanging onto."

This is a lifetime job. Yes, you initially take this step, but there are going to be things that are going to rear their ugly heads in your life because you're going to be out there and you're going to continue to bang heads with the universe. There's a continued discipline necessary to remind yourself that now God is running the show. He is my director and I need to be directed by God and not always take the reins in my hands because I've done such a bad job when I've been steering this ship. I must now start to allow God into every aspect of my life. And that does separate the men from the boys, the girls from the women. It does, because of the amount of pressure the ego puts on us to stay in control. The ego does not want to give up control. When we seek through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God in step eleven, seeking guidance from God and operating on the intuitive guidance that we get takes fortitude. That really takes a spiritual discipline that many people are not going to be able to do a real good job with.

An exercise that will not work for us is to be working on your character defects. Some really good people have said step six is not doing what you want to do, and step seven is doing what you don't want to do. We think that's a horrific oversimplification of this. God is involved in this. Yes, we need to participate. There's a wonderful statement in the Twelve and Twelve that says, "God will not render you white as snow without your cooperation." I think what our cooperation in this step is being aware and then asking for God's help and continuing to do that as a spiritual discipline. That's what's worked for us, just trying to not be selfish or trying to not be lustful lasts about a minute and a half, because self cannot defeat self. Selfishness and self-centeredness...that is the root of our troubles. So if we go into this without God's help, we're going to a gunfight with a penknife.

No human power can relieve our alcoholism, and certainly not self-knowledge, or self-determination. Those are both human powers. The power must manifest through you from a power greater than yourself. That's what the big book is about. Now if you have problems with that, then you have problems with Alcoholics Anonymous or a twelve step solution because this whole program is about accessing the power of God. If you have a problem with God, you don't believe in God, you think that's all malarkey, or you're one of those guys that just goes to a lot of meetings, well, that's all well and good but that's not what twelve step recovery is. The twelve step solution is a program designed to bring you to a place called recovered where God will be doing for you what you cannot do for yourself.

That's what this whole fellowship and whole program was built on – accessing the power of God. And in step six and step seven, that's what those two steps are all about. Does that mean all of your character defects are going to be removed today? It is more up to God than it is up to us. Sometimes God uses our character defects to help other people. We need to consider that also. The authors ego was not put under control right away, even though he was asking for it. So who knows...what you need to do is you need to participate. God will not render you white as snow without your participation and then you need to let go of your attachment to the outcome. You're going to want the character defects that are causing you personally a hard time. You're going to be less interested in the character defects that might harm others. God might have a whole different plan for you and part of this recovery process is being open to that and allowing God into your life to mold you, to guide you and to direct you, and to build with you as He will. Think about that. That's one of the main prayers..."God, please build with me and do with me as Thou wilt." So he's going to build and do with

you as He will. We need to be open to that too.

*"When ready we say something like this, "My creator, I am now willing that you shall have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Lend me strength to go out from here to do your bidding. Amen."* We have then completed step seven. That's another affirmation prayer. If we're totally willing to have God remove our character defects, at least the ones that are in our conscious mind at that moment, saying the step seven prayer is asking God and affirming that that's what we want. We're saying, "God, please remove these defects of character that stand in the way of my usefulness to you, God, and my fellows." It's not a selfish prayer. The people that run around saying, "It's a selfish program,"; that's just one more cop-out that you hear all the time. This is a selfless program. This is a program about destroying selfishness and self-centeredness in you so you can be some good out there in the world. That's the whole trajectory of this step process. By asking God to help us be willing is extremely important but where we can make an effort to change, we make that effort. But our effort alone is insufficient.. The power of prayer in this program is something that you have to experience to believe. When you get to the other end of these steps, you have had some unbelievable spiritual experiences. And it's amazing. It will make a believer out of anyone who tries it. It really will. Very few people get to the end of the steps and still have really strong atheistic or agnostic belief systems. This'll chip away at those by offering so many powerful experiences to let you know that you are accessing that power.

We've done the fifth step. We've returned home where we can be quiet for an hour; then we do steps six and seven. Again, action, more action...right away many of us ask the people that were working with, right after they get up off their knees from step seven, they are to start working on their list of people and institutions that they've harmed.

*"Now we need more action without which we find that faith without works is dead."* Let's look at steps eight and nine. *"We have a list of all persons we have harmed and are willing to make amends."* Now the list of people is basically from the fourth column of the resentment inventory.

Anywhere that we've recognized that the manifestation of self has harmed other people, and especially the relationship inventory emphasis on sex, where we're asked to answer a bunch of those questions, a lot of times those questions are pointing to other people we have harmed. So we need to hang onto the fourth step until we start working on our eighth step list. Many of us have people say, "My sponsor said after we did the fifth step to burn that inventory," There's an issue if you burn that inventory because you actually need it for your eighth step list. *"So we've made a list of all persons we have harmed and are willing to make amends."* *We made it when we took inventory. "We made it when we subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past."*

Notice that it does not say we apologize for the damage done in the past. It says we're going to go out and repair the damage done in the past. Those are two completely different things. Another thing that We have heard in a lot of fellowship meetings, you'll be on the ninth step or something and they'll say, "Yeah, I got to step nine and I went home and I apologized to my wife for ruining her life for the last twenty years, and you know what? She didn't take it very well." That's somebody who doesn't understand what we're going after here. We're not going after apologizing; we're going after repairing. There's going to be a lot of work involved in that. Another thing that nobody likes to hear in contemporary fellowship meetings, that there's a lot of work you need to do. Well, we would rather tell them the truth than watch them drink again. If you're not engaged in that work, you're not ensuring your immunity from alcohol.

*"We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes."* There's another prayer directive. Because when we put our eighth step list together, willing to some of them but I was scared we were not willing to make amends to some other ones. Some of us couldn't believe that we would be able to have the capacity to go stand in front of these people. But what we're supposed to do is every day – probably multiple times – ask God, "Please give me the willingness to make these direct amends," because our life is on the line. *"Remember it was agreed at the beginning that we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol".* And any length includes making direct amends and repairing damage done in the past to the best of our ability. *"Probably there are still going to be some misgivings."* *There's always going to be some misgivings. "As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel reluctant about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we may not and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them."*

Before this book was written, it was a religious process and when the Oxford Group people went back and talked about making amends, they would be talking about their religious experience. Someone would be making amends prior to the writing of the big book and say, "Listen, I've found Jesus. And for me to be able to get a real live relationship with Jesus and to be able to overcome alcoholism, I need to set right the wrong." Now they found through experience that sometimes saying it that way would prejudice other people. Not so much that they weren't being honest, they were being very honest, but the fact of the matter is that some people can see you as a religious fanatic if you do that. And that sometimes can reduce your effectiveness and your helpfulness to them. From our own experience, when We've made direct amends, a lot of times those people have come back to us and asked for our help, either with a loved one or for themselves. You don't want to say anything that will reduce your effectiveness in being able to help them or other people. So you don't want to be branded a religious fanatic. Bill separated out a lot of that Oxford Group terminology to make it more of a secular type of program, but still had a lot of the vocabulary from the Oxford Group style that remained.

Some people don't want to hear your amends. In the next paragraph, it talks about when and where we should bring up God, but it does say in this that they're going to be more interested in a demonstration, that you are willing to try to repair the damage more than apologize for it. That's the most important thing on the agenda. *"At the moment, we were trying to*

*put our lives in order but this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and to the people about us.* Now, that's what our real purpose is as recovered alcoholics. That's a complete shift away from selfishness and self-centeredness. We're going from a life system foundation of selfishness and self-centeredness to fitting ourselves, with God's help, to be of service to people about us and to be about God's business. We need to keep that in mind that that's where we're headed. *"It is seldom wise to approach an individual who still smarts from our injustice to him and announce to him we've gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to be branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message."*

If we're fitting ourselves to be of maximum service, we don't want to kill any future opportunities. *"But our man is sure to be impressed with our sincere desire to set right the wrong. He's going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than our talk of spiritual discoveries."* He's going to be more interested in us paying the money back than saying, "We've found this wonderful way." So we need to be practical about this. *"We don't use this as excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense."* So, if it's going to serve a purpose...let's say they say, "Why are you doing this?" Maybe that will give you an opportunity to explain your new course of action. "Listen, I'm in a recovery process from alcoholism and for me to be able to stay away from alcohol, I need to set right the wrongs in my past. I found a very, very important spiritual direction for myself" and you can talk about God if it's going to serve any good purpose. *"The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise."*

Here's different sections in the ninth step about how to approach people. This is the man we hated. Now here's some bad news to many of us, if you have a resentment or you hate somebody out there and there was harm, you've got to confront them. That's not something everybody wants to hear, but if you have the type of resentment that just boils inside you and you can't get rid of it, the best way to get rid of it is to follow this.

*"The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us."* The more you hate somebody, the more it's going to benefit you to do this step.

There have been people that have really harmed me in our life, and when we put it on paper, the harms they did to us and the harms we did to them, they did ninety-five percent more harm to us than we did to them. So that should be a justified resentment, why should we go to them? They're the ones that harmed us.

Well, here's the thing. There are no justified resentments. There are only fatal ones for an alcoholic. So I need freedom, we need to find freedom from this anger, this resentment and it says, "It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us." That means we can find freedom from this anger, this resentment and this hatred, by actually going to this person that we hate. *"We go to them in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret. Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. We simply tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank and open, we will be gratified with the result. In nine cases out of ten, the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam."*

Those are the instructions for going to the man we hate. Now this is a very important one. A lot of people skip this, they don't even put the person down on the fourth step inventory because they're so worried about having to go out and make amends. But I'll tell you what, how free do you want to be? And if this one sentence in here is true, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so, nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we go to the man we hate. What if that's actually true? That means that the whole program will fall apart on us if we don't. Sometimes we couldn't stand these people, but we knew that if the resentment and hatred stayed in our heart, it would have a corrosive effect on any type of spiritual life we were trying to put together. So we placed the outcome in God's hands. We asked for the courage to do these things because we were really reluctant and had a lot of anxiety about it. But we just went out and did it. And walking away, we found that we no longer hated or resented the person at all. We really saw them as someone who was perhaps spiritually sick, like ourselves, and there was no reason, there was no space in us any more for that anger or that resentment. Our ego will want to say, "I did this basically because you did that, but I went ahead and did this and I was wrong." Their faults are not discussed.

There's been times where people wanted to make amends to us in the middle of making amends to them, and what we say to them is basically, "Look...I'm here because of my side of the street. If you'd like to make an appointment with me at some other time and discuss anything you want to discuss with me, that's really great, but what this whole meeting is for me to lay out where I've been at fault and see how I can repair the damage. So if you don't mind, I'd like to stick to that topic." Sometimes we have done that. Sometimes we let them talk. A lot of times these amends are very healing for the people who you're making amends to. Also some of the things many of us do in amends is ask three questions after were done. We lay out the harm we are clear on and then ask them three questions. Number one, have I left anything out? Is there any other way I have harmed you that I am unaware of? And let them talk.

Question number two is, do you need to tell me how this made you feel? Do you need to talk about how this affected you? . Then we stop and I let them talk. This is allowing them to vent, allowing them to heal. And then the third question is, what do I need to do to set right this wrong? If we are not clear on it, if it's paying back money, you pay back money. But if it's for a lifetime of oppressive behavior, we ask the person, "What do I need to do to set right this wrong?" And if it's appropriate, if it's ethical, if it's legal, and if it's possible, we should do what they ask us to do because that's how you complete an amends like this.

Think of the term amendment. We've got amendments to our constitutions. An amendment to a constitution is basically adding a whole new piece to make right the whole. To amend something is to change it, we're not going there to apologize, although an apology might be part of the amends. That's not what we're there for. We're really there to demonstrate to them that we're willing to set right the wrongs and to figure out how to do that. Because we might have an idea how to set right this wrong, but that might not be their idea. We're very presumptuous to conclude to ourselves how to set right the wrongs, we have to be open to what they think we need to do to set right the wrongs.

*"Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors." We cannot hide from our creditors. We're not supposed to dodge them. "Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking. They usually know about it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory that it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can, we let these people know we are sorry our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors, no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we have to face them."* There are a couple of places in this book that tells us important warning signs about drinking. Being afraid to face creditors is one of them.

Let's say I owe Visa two grand. What I want to do is wait until I have two grand, I want to walk into the Visa office, I want to throw two grand down and say, "Here's your money." But the fact of the matter is I don't have two grand right now. So what I need to do is let these creditors know where I stand. They like to know what's going on. The thing that makes them the most afraid is for you to disappear off the face of the earth, to not answer phone calls, to not return letters, to just stick your head in the sand. That's the worst thing you can do with these creditors. You need to arrange the best deal you can. If all you can afford is a hundred dollars a month and they want two hundred, you just tell them, "Look, all I can afford is a hundred dollars a month. I'm going to be sending it to you. A lot of times, they help you by agreeing to it. We have known people that have taken twenty years to clean it up. As long as we're about the business of cleaning it up, we're going to be safe and protected. The minute we stick our head in the sand and pretend that these creditors don't exist, then we place ourselves in the unenviable position of being susceptible to the obsession of the mind coming back and drinking again

Let's just assume, hypothetically, that we have had some criminal activity in the past. *"Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We might be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person..."* fifth step... *"But we are sure that we would be imprisoned or lose our jobs if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing. Maybe we are divorced and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble, too. Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be."* Quite possibly the stupidest thing we ever hear in a twelve-step meeting, is on this step, somebody will raise their hand and say, "I had a list of all the people that I had harmed and I showed it to my sponsor and my sponsor said, 'Listen, it says except when to do so would harm others and you're an other, so it will harm you to go do all this, so you don't have to do it.'"

What you need to know about this step is you are not others. If it's going to harm you, too bad, that's the spiritual exercise you need to take to overcome drinking. We are not supposed to consider the personal consequences at all, unless other people are involved. *"We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything."* There are times when people doing this step ended up going to jail, they would have ended up in jail anyway. What are you going to do? How do you want to live in the future? How free do you want to be? *"We must not shrink at anything. Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit."* Let's say you're supporting a family and you have outstanding warrants. You need to sit down with the family and you need to explain to them what you need to do. And they need to be okay with it to a certain degree, because if you're the sole support for that family, before you run off and put yourself in prison or start sending all of your money to pay off amends, you need to get permission from the people who are depending on you. If you are a family supporter, you need to get agreement from the family. You need to make sure that they're okay with it, because you can't just run off and save yourself and harm everybody else around you. We need to be fearless, thorough and rigorously honest and sometimes that means with the family.

*"A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the judge and said, 'Here I am.' We thought he might be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted. Before taking drastic action which*

*might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated, we must not shrink."*

We need to use tact and common sense, before you run off and make amends, its highly recommend that you talk to an experienced sponsor or spiritual advisor who has completed their amends, who has experience with doing amends. Many people in the modern recovery fellowships really haven't done this step. So by going to those people, you're just going to get an opinion. So we should not be afraid to point people to experienced members of the fellowship who have has similar problems.

If you're going to place yourself in maximum usefulness to God and other people, you go and you make direct amends. We know a lot of people who have just sent money anonymously back instead of making the direct amends. That's not really what the exercise is about. We have fear sometimes about facing the people we have harmed. We have to ask God to help us overcome that fear and face these things. You want to be free, you face these people. If you don't have the gumption right at this moment to do it, ask God until you do have the courage to do it.

We hear a lot about living amends, in family situations, you make a direct amends. You sit down and you go over all the things that you've done in the past. You ask them, "How do I need to set right this wrong?" and then there's a living amend portion that will follow that. You're going to try to be the best family member that you can be from that point on. That's a living amends. But this step isn't about living amends; it's about direct amends. So, is there a way to do living amends that's appropriate and in the spirit of this? Absolutely, but you don't do it instead of, you do it as well as. It's our ego that makes us believe that it's going to be a terrible negative consequence. That's the terrible part of our ego that we need to kill. Living an unrecovered life without alcohol is dying an alcoholic death.

### Into Action (Step 9 Part 2)

There's confusion from the people concerning the nature of alcoholism in treatment centers. There's confusion from the general public. There's confusion from people in the twelve step fellowships. You get a different answer to every single question from every single person. Let's say that there were thirty people in a room that were all diagnosed and undergoing treatment from cancer. Most of their answers to questions about their illness would be pretty similar because they would have paid attention to the understanding of the illness, the process of the treatment and the process of the recovery. That doesn't seem to happen in alcoholism or addiction treatment. What seems to happen is a lot of people don't really understand recovery. A lot of people don't even think that it exists. They think that you're absolutely sick forever. And when you think about the general misunderstanding out there, it's pretty scary. Addictive illness is the number one health threat in the country and the people that have it are not really paying attention to the illness, what that means, the recovery process and how you engage in that.

In this book there are numbers of promises. These promises materialize if we work for them, if we participate in the maintenance of our spiritual condition by utilizing the tools and steps that are provided to us. They bring about a new consciousness, a new way of thinking, a new way of acting. It's a revolutionary personality change at depth. You are reborn. This is a terminology that this book uses and what recovery is. And so many people, when you ask them what recovery is, they short-change not only everybody else but they short-change themselves.

Some will say "recovery is only putting the plug in the jug". There's a lot of jug pluggers in recovery fellowships and we've made the case that they may be heavy drinkers and not even realize that they're not really alcoholics. And that's throughout the twelve step fellowships; there are people with power, choice and control. When they decide to plug that jug on up, they do. Then they wonder about the people that are having a tough time keeping that plug in the jug. What they don't realize is the difference between the heavy drinker and the alcoholic, the difference between the drug abuser and the drug-dependent, they don't get deeply enough involved in this text to understand what needs to happen, what the person needs to participate in to get to that state called recovered. And it's the only illness we know where very few people know what's going on who have it.

When you hear someone say "Well, I've been in this program for some time now and I still don't understand it when some people say they've recovered." You can really tell who's been reading their book and who hasn't. First of all, you're not in the program. You're in the fellowship. The program is in this book and if you have worked this book like a textbook, you have worked a program. If you have not done so, you don't have what is known as an Alcoholics Anonymous program. What you have is fellowship-based sobriety which is an incredibly far cry from what's available. What's available is the state called recovered, which has something like a hundred and eighty promises, significant, life-changing promises that are available but they don't just happen because you sit in a chair somewhere. If you go sit in a PTA meeting, does that make you a parent? If you sit in a chicken coop, does it make you a chicken?

There's a process involved with this, if you're in real trouble with alcohol or you're in real trouble with drugs, the absolute best use of your time would be to move through this book fearlessly and thoroughly, actually doing what it tells you to do. Because when that happens, rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Rarely have we seen a person not have incredible changes to their quality of life. Somewhere along the line it became politically correct to use the fellowship as one dollar group therapy.

In the early days newcomers would bring in their problems and discuss them and some of the experienced members would show them how to apply the steps to that problem s to be able to solve not only the problem but the causes and conditions of the problem. You're not just treating the symptoms; you're treating the underlying cause and condition. But

to just show up at a meeting and update everybody on your drama du jour is futile at best. It may be a way some people who aren't really alcoholic or aren't really drug-dependent can kind of improve their life and feel a social sense of belonging. There may be some really good characteristics involved with some people, but if you're using that as a defense against drugs or alcohol, showing up and Bob Newhart-ing with everybody else, you aren't going to make it. You're not going to be able to stay around and the time and the place is going to come when a series of circumstances are going to bring you to a place where suddenly the thought crosses your mind that a gallon of vodka would be really great after this meeting.

That happened to countless of us who have tried easier, softer ways, which would be a Bob Newhart type group therapy, throw a dollar in the basket and complain. It's like having a critical illness and sitting in the waiting room, just talking with other people with the same critical illness week after month after year and never going in for the treatment. That would be completely insane, wouldn't it? They would call the psych unit if you were to try to do that. But there's just such a general misunderstanding and that's why if you're looking for a sponsor, if you're looking for a spiritual advisor, find somebody who's really qualified with this book, who really has experienced what's offered in this book. Not only are your chances better for staying separated from whatever drug or booze you're powerless over, but you're going to get to a place where you're actually going to be able to have your life recreated. When somebody at a meeting goes up and gets a sobriety coin, a lot of times in certain fellowships, they'll ask the question, "How did you do it?" And they'll start telling you how they did it, how they keep themselves sober. Right there, they've missed the entire point. You don't keep yourself sober. If you could have kept yourself sober, you would have done a better job of it by now.

You're sober under the grace of God, and you know what? The grace of God lasts as long as ignorance. As soon as you understand you need to participate in this process in this book, you will need to get busy to keep that grace. This may be upsetting to some people but, if you disturb the alcoholic about their condition, this is all to the good. That's a quote out of *Working with Others*. We can get somebody upset, by drawing their attention to the fact that they're in more trouble than they think they are. But would you rather step on their feelings or step on their grave? Sometimes you have a choice. We need to help fortify our spirit. There are things that we can do as far as our participation in recovery and there are things that God has to do, but if we aren't doing our part, it seems to be very difficult for *God to do God's part*.

*"This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted money from a bitterly hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong-doing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined. He felt he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right."* And so often, that's the case with us.

Our ego defends against having to go out and make amends. You work with anybody, especially on their first set of amends, and they're going to come up with any number of reasons why they can't or shouldn't do these amends. And there's a bunch of sponsors and spiritual advisors out there that give you a pass on amends, because probably they haven't done them themselves. They never got deeply involved in them. They acquiesce to half measures as far as you going through amends. They are short-changing you. They are robbing you of incredible value because there nothing that puts as much muscle in someone's sobriety and in someone's recovery than a really thorough demonstration with these amends.

*"If he had opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival? After consulting with his wife and partner,"* Remember – we must seek people's consent if they are going to be involved or could be affected negatively. *"He came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his creator guilty of such ruinous slander."* There is something unbelievably magical about doing everything you can to clean up your past. That makes the connection so much clearer with God. Figure to amends, you're like a static-y radio. You're trying to tune in a station but you can't quite get it because the station is too far away, you can't really hear because there's static and background noise. You get through amends and it's like having cable radio. You go right to the station and everything is really clear to you. You've opened up that intuitive capacity in your spirit where you understand right from wrong, you know which direction to take and, outgrow fear and you're not angry any more. There are promises that come true but you gain focus from not having all this static from your past. There's a good book out there called *Drop the Rock*, the book basically covers step six and step seven, but you're really dropping the rock when you finish your amends. You're not carrying around a knapsack filled with rocks any more. You're able to move forward free and clear into the future. *"He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again and all would be lost any how."* Now, placing the outcome in God's hands is sometimes difficult for an alcoholic. Sometimes we want these people to like us again, and that's not the point of making the amends.

The point of making the amends is to make a demonstration, to do your utmost to set right the wrong. You're not supposed to worry about the outcome. The outcome needs to be placed in God's hands. You're the one, though, that has to ask for the strength and the courage to go out and make these amends. Because if you don't, and you really are alcoholic or you really are a drug addict, the time and the place is going to come when you're going to put drugs or alcohol back in your body. That's a promise. You can't allow a whole series of unfinished amends to exist with you for the rest of your life in recovery. It will corrode your recovery and your spirit. You'll never be free.

We are doing these amends for survival. If you have a clear picture of step one, you recognize the fact that if you don't fully place ourselves under God's care and protection, and that means making amends. you are going to drink again. The worst thing in the world is for an alcoholic to think they're making amends when they're running around apologizing to

people. You are not making amends when you're running around apologizing to people. You're just confirming with them that you're sorry. They already know you're sorry. How many times have we said, "I'm sorry"? What they need to see is an actual demonstration of your willingness to set right the wrong. If it's paying back money, then you pay back money. If it's admitting that you were wrong, then you admit you were wrong. If you've wrecked somebody's car, then you work with them to figure out how much that was worth and you start a payment plan. You do your utmost to set right the wrong. Running around saying you're sorry, that might make you feel good for a week or two, but without a full demonstration, what's going to happen is your spirit is going to become sick again.

Spiritual illness, that's really what alcoholism and drug addiction is, the spiritual malady, and we need to do our utmost to help that heal. We've got our part and God has God's part. Our part is to follow these directions. Here is a beautiful example of somebody who prays for willingness, prays for courage and goes and does a real heroic thing. The guy that was used as an example took money from somebody, he didn't give him a receipt, and then when the guy wanted the money back, he said, "You never gave me any money" and then started spreading all around town, "This guy's trying to hustle me for money." He destroys this guy's reputation and his business. Now that's a pretty tough one to climb out of. Let's see what he did. *"He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. He said, 'This is where I was wrong.' His action met wide-spread approval and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago"*. So he got up and admitted he was wrong, he would do his utmost to set right that wrong by paying back the money and admitting that this other guy had been telling the truth. And he did this in front of a full congregation at a church.

When you make a demonstration like that, your ego is going to tell you, "I am going to be ruined. I am going to be destroyed. I am going to look small." That's rarely what happens. What happens is these people see a strong desire to change, become a different person, to be honest and forthright and try to set right the wrongs. Most people will now view you as trustworthy, honest, spiritual, the type of person that they can feel comfortable with. These are all really good things. It's just our ego that's going to want to tell us, "Don't do this." There are a lot of sponsors out there that have never experienced this, so they'll tell their sponsees, "Don't do that", and it's near criminal because anyone who has gotten through amends would never tell you not to do this. They would tell you it's the most significant thing that they've ever done for themselves. The only people that are going to tell you not to do this are people who haven't done it themselves.

You need to understand that so if you have a sponsor or a spiritual advisor that's giving you a pass on this, they're co-signing your own disaster as you move forward. Sometimes you really have to pray for the courage. Sometimes you really need to look back at step one. Sometimes you really need to look at your commitment in step three. Have I really made the decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God? Because if we have really made that decision, we are going to go out and do this and place the outcome in God's hands.

None of us do this perfectly. Many of us do this with a lot of trepidation. But the ones that do it get the promises that we see on the wall or are read at meetings, the twelve promises. They materialize when you do this step. They don't materialize because you're sitting in ninety and ninety or just staying sober.

*"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally worse than most people but drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative."* As with all the patriarchal verbiage in this book, if you're a woman, just change it around..."a husband could get worn out, resentful and uncommunicative"... *"How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs or their equivalent for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with a girl who understands. In fairness, we must say that she may understand but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him."*

Here is where the instructions start for stepping out on the spouse or significant other. *"Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think."* Sometimes somebody who is really inexperienced with amends may go up to his wife and say, "Honey, you know the four babysitters that we've had over the past three or four years? I've had affairs with all of them. Boy, I'm glad I got that off my chest." If you do something like this how is the wife going to feel? We don't do these amends to harm anyone. We don't do these amends when they cause additional grief or suffering. So they're saying if someone doesn't know, should you tell them? Probably not, because what real good would it do, except make you feel a little bit better. And we don't do these amends so that we feel better. We do these amends to set right wrongs. *"If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly, we should admit our fault."* So, yes, I've been wild but, a lot of times they're going to go, "With who? I know you've been cheating on me. I need to know who it is and where they live..." It's not fair to give those details because what you're doing is you're involving other people.

*"She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be some justifiable exceptions and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found that this is the best course to take. Our design for living is not a one way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can she. It is better however that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy."* Almost everything important in this book Bill says three times and he just told you three times there that you are not to give out

names and numbers.

Lets say this guy had some affairs and his wife kind of knew that he was stepping out. They usually do, coming home at eleven at night saying you were at work, all that kind of crazy stuff. So, would it be right for him to tell her? I don't think so, because it can cause other people damage. If you're going to have to live with somebody that's just not going to let it go, then you're gonna have to live with somebody that's not going to let it go or you're going to need to make a decision to separate. Those are your choices. Your choice is not to tell her what she wants to know, because we're being told right in this book that we shouldn't do that. There may be justifiable exceptions but the rule is to not involve other people, not cause other people harm.

*"Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both sides will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let bygones be bygones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness utmost in mind."* Remember the spouse is supposed to be going along with this twelve-step process if you can get them to. *"Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion - jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk face-to-face combat. If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is keep sober."*

That's one of the saddest things we ever hear in a ninth step meeting, when somebody says, "I make amends just by staying sober." *"Certainly he must keep sober for there will be no home if he doesn't, but he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today and would perhaps be dead. The alcoholic is like a tornado, roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowing?"*

Most of us were no prize before we started drinking but as we started drinking we became progressively more and more dysfunctional, bordering at the end on extremely selfish and even violent. But as we get involved in the fourth step we started to seriously look at the fourth column and the sex inventory and answered those questions in the sex inventory, and we come to the conclusion that they would have been crazy to stay with us or to always act reasonable. Sometimes we are capable of anything in blackouts and binges.

So, we need to understand that we're tornadoes. We tear through everybody's lives, we get sober and we still have that foundation of selfishness and self-centeredness. We really think that they should lay off. I'm getting sober. Don't they realize that I'm going to meetings? They should start treating me better. That attitude comes from a place of selfishness and self-centeredness. You've got to understand you made your family emotionally ill. You robbed them of emotional security. You robbed them of financial security. You tried to make them feel that everything was their fault.

*"Yes there is a long period of reconstructions ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible."* Or they are mostly responsible. *"So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love."* You need to start treating your family in a completely different way. You are not to talk about their faults or their defects. You are to ask God every single morning for patience, tolerance, kindness and love toward them. You should be a completely new dad, or a completely new mom, after you've gone through this step. Now every day we fall short in word, thought and deed, but there are steps that we can take when we slide backward, when we make mistakes. But there is a long period of reconstruction ahead and we owe it to them if we've torn them

One of the worst things we see in the twelve step fellowships is somebody has ripped their family to hell over a twenty or thirty year period of time, they get sober, they're going to the "share selfishly discussion meetings", and all of a sudden they meet a little cutie-pie and they run off with them. That is the exact opposite of what they're talking about in these amends. "I just feel more comfortable with somebody who's in the program." There's no more gargantuan a sin than that. They leave the family without any means of picking up the pieces because there's not somebody taking the lead in the spiritual life.

*"The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it. Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words."* Doctor Bob used to say, "I always carry the message to people and when necessary, I use words." Your actions are so loud; I can't hear a word you say. To carry the message as a changed individual is the goal.

*"We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone. There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen - we send them an honest letter."* We have done graveside amends for people who have passed. We have done a number of amends for people who have disappeared, we write a letter, go to a place where we feel that their spirit is the strongest, some place that we have good memories of them, and we read the letter out loud like we are reading it to them and then we either burn it or I bury it. Many of us have had unbelievable experiences with those type of amends.

*"There may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided."* Postponement is tricky. If you're planning a trip to California and you have five amends and your trip is in a month or two, we can cut you a break. You may be able to wait a couple of months. But if you're saying "I can't make amends because they're in California", that isn't good enough. Start saving your money for a ticket. You need to go out and make direct amends. *"We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping."* This is another instruction. Be sensible, be tactful, be considerate and be humble, but you don't have to be servile or scraping. We don't have to take a lot of abuse from somebody in a continuing manner. Yes, they may need to blow off some steam in the amend process, but if they're not going to let it go, and we've done our utmost..., we don't need to be anyone's doormat. We don't need to be servile and we don't need to be scraping. *"As God's people we stand on our feet. We don't crawl before anyone."* Many people refer to the twelve promises of AA at meetings. We have an issue with how this is done, we wouldn't mind it if they said, "These are the steps that should materialize for you before you're halfway through with the ninth step", if they would put them in context like that, and let you know that there's also promises for every other action step in this book. But what they do without that context is they short-change you. They say, "These are the twelve promises." And they don't tell you how to get them. So there's actually people sitting there waiting to get them through osmosis by sitting in meetings, they don't get the promises right away and they figure that whatever group they're in doesn't work. So it's not a really good idea to put these out like a carrot for new people but not tell them what they have to do to get them.. *"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development..."* What phase of our development? Making amends. If we're painstaking about it, *"we will be amazed before we are halfway through."* Halfway through with our amends list. *"We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly."* Why quickly? Because you go through the steps quickly. Why slowly. Because you go through the steps slowly. *"They will always materialize if we work for them."*

Sometime almost ninety percent of the people in fellowships are inexperienced with the text. If you were to ask them the question, how do you get those promises, they would give you any numbers of answers except make at least half of your amends. There's a general misunderstanding. There will be some changes, if you stop drinking some life situations are going to get better, usually the external. What you deal with in the recovery process is you really deal with the internals. By sitting sober in ninety and ninety, a lot of externals will get better and you'll think those are the promises, but you will be short-changing yourself. This is about repairing your spirit. A spiritual awakening is a spiritual awakening. So if your spirit awakens through this process, what do you have before it? You have a spirit that's asleep. You're walking around asleep, thinking you're awake. Some of us were asleep on every level you could be asleep on. We only started to understand a little bit about life, a little bit about relationships and a little bit about spirituality when we started to get involved in these steps.

he spiritual appendix in the back of the book says there's two basic types of spiritual experiences. One of them is the sudden, drastic white light kind that Bill talks about in his story, and the other one is the spiritual awakening of the educational variety. The educational variety is when we painstakingly work our way through these twelve steps and we participate in the awakening of our spirit. There are wonderful things available in the fellowships. There's a lot of service. In AA you can become a GSR, then you can be the GCM, then you can be a delegate and you can work your way up to trustee. Or you can be the coffee-maker, you can be the treasurer, you can start rehab commitments and go to jails and institutions. You can get really busy with service work. However, the people that do that prior to going through the steps aren't carrying the message of recovery. They're carrying the message of sobriety when they do that. So you can put a lot of work into your service life but it's really not putting work into your program. It's putting work into the service legacy. Or it's putting work into the fellowship legacy. It's not putting work into the recovery legacy. We think everything should really start with the recovery legacy. In the early days of AA, they didn't even want you in the meetings if you weren't at least really trying with the steps. They didn't consider that you had an honest desire to quit drinking if you weren't working the steps. Somewhere along the line it became okay in most of the fellowships out there to not work the steps. And that's a shame. It really is a shame, because the recovery statistics could be infinitely superior to what they are right now if all there was were experienced sponsors and experienced spiritual advisors.

### Into Action (Step 10)

One of the things that is incredibly difficult for people to do is just to stop drinking or stop doing drugs. And so many people think that abstinence is the answer, and for a whole group of people, abstinence is not enough. What happens is their attitude within abstinence tends to deteriorate over the course of time, and they end up picking back up. Relapses are a huge component of addictive illness, unfortunately. It doesn't need to be, but currently it is. If you look up alcoholism in any of the clinical definitions, it's described as a chronically relapsing condition. The twelve step program is about taking people away from a chronically relapsing condition. You don't need to chronically relapse. If you're

someone who has had a tough time, you've been in and out of twelve step fellowships, you've been in and out of treatment centers or detoxes and you just can't seem to stay separated from drugs or alcohol, there is a way. And there's a very significant answer in the twelve step process.

The twelve step process has been designed for you specifically, especially the relapser or the person who has a tough time separating from drugs and alcohol. The first nine steps bring us up to making direct amends to the people or institutions that we have harmed through the application of our character defects in our lives. That's a very important part of the recovery program, becoming responsible for your behavior, some of the harms that you've caused in the past. It's directly proportional to your ability to stay clean and sober moving forward how fearlessly and thoroughly you take these steps. We've looked at the problem, in step one. We've looked at the solution in steps two and steps three. We've looked at how our addiction is showing up in our lives in steps four and five. We've become ready to move away from the way we behave and show up in life in steps six and seven. And in steps eight and nine, we take responsibility for the things we've done in our past. And that brings us to step ten.

We made very clear if you want the ninth step promises, do the ninth step. You're not going to get them by sitting in the meeting hoping to get those promises through osmosis and you're certainly not going to get them by sharing all the drama in your life. We don't know what promises you actually get by sharing your drama.

*"Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly..."*, because some people go through the steps quickly, *"sometimes slowly"*, because some people go through the steps slowly. *"But they will always materialize if we work for them."*

*"This thought brings us step ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along."* We've learned how to take inventory in step four. We've learned that it's our resentments or our anger, the way fear manifests in our life, the guilt and remorse that we feel from the harms that we've caused that are directly proportional to our addiction or to our alcoholism. In step ten, we're being told that we need to continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We've learned in step eight and especially step nine how to do that, how to set right any new mistakes that we make as we go along.

*"We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleared up the past."* Using that sentence, what many of us will do when taking somebody through the steps is we get them into steps ten and eleven while they're making their amends. And we do that basically because it says, *"We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past."* Let's say this is the first time somebody's going through the steps. We want to bring them into steps ten and eleven while they're in the process of going out and making direct amends. Making direct amends takes a certain amount of power. Sometimes it's a very difficult thing to go and make direct amends to people. We have a lot of trepidation. We have a lot of fear connected with actually going and knocking on somebody's door and walking in and admitting your faults. So we need all the power we can get so that we ensure our success with the step. We want to be as fearless and as thorough with step nine as we can. Prayer and meditation offers someone a lot of power in their life.

*"We have entered the world of the spirit."* The next time you're asked for a topic at a recovery meeting make this the topic, "could everyone here who has entered the world of the spirit share their personal experience with that"? And then see what happen. We would suspect you will get a look on a lot of people's faces that would say, "What??" There's not a lot of people who are going to share their experiences on entering the world of the spirit, because there's not a lot of people who have gone through the first nine steps in a fearless and thorough way. If you've gone through the first nine steps in a fearless and thorough way, you're going to understand what the world of the spirit is.

The world of the spirit manifests itself in many different ways among all of us, but one the ways that it manifests is in power. We have power in our life today to do the things that we never could have done on our own before. We are in tune with an intuitive part of our being, our spirit and intuition. Intuition is knowing without conscious thought. So when life hits you, you handle it in a very spiritual way because you in tune to that intuition, knowing right from wrong and whether to go left or right. There's a certain effectiveness that comes into your life, and we can look at it as being connected to the spirit, being connected to God. Understanding something intuitively is being awake to God consciousness. What would God have us be and what would "He" have us do, being awake to those things is being in the realm of the spirit. And when you're in the realm of the spirit, you have access to that power. Remember in step three we make a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God as we understand Him, so God is going to have a care for us and we seek God's will for us, and through that seeking we actually find. We find that through an intuitive capacity within us, that exposes us to the power of the spiritual realm.

*"Our next function is to grow an understanding and effectiveness."* So that's a function that follows us into step ten. To grow in understanding is to continue to seek out answers in a spiritual way rather than in a selfish way; that's true understanding. Today, people call us up asking me about this, that or the other thing, and intuitively we will be able to help them. Not necessarily by telling them to go left or to go right but bringing them back to the true nature of what's going on and sometimes asking the right questions. We become very effective at helping people. Being helpful is a really great way to feel good about yourself and good about your world.

When you start to be of help to people your whole perspective changes. You look at a newcomer whose perspective is "it's all about me" you can understand and guide them. There's a shift in attitude and outlook that is absolutely amazing that goes on. All of a sudden, you're sponsoring someone and they're not calling you about themselves any more. They're calling you saying, "Hey, I've got this guy I'm working with..." All of a sudden, it's not about them. It's about how they can be effective and how they can be helpful, and that is an incredible shift in perception with an individual. It goes a long way toward their recovery and toward their quality of life. *"This is not an overnight matter."* Growing in

understanding and effectiveness. "It should continue for our lifetime." This is telling us that we should continue to practice these principles in all of our affairs. *"Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear."* We learned just how dangerous they were in steps four, five, six and seven. We begin to develop a capacity to watch and identify these as they manifest in our emotions. *"When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them."* And that's a step seven. *"We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone."* That's steps five and steps nine. *"Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can love and help. Love and tolerance of others is our code."*

We see step ten as a reactive step. When we start to move into step eleven we'll see that there's three disciplines, upon awakening, as we move through day, and as we retire at night. Those are the three different eleventh step disciplines. We see step ten tied in directly with how we move through the day, how we react. We've been given a whole new set of tools for living an effective life and recovering from alcoholism. We need to start using these tools in a reactive way. When things hit us out there in the world, we need to know which tools to pull out of our tool kit to use, so that we're living a spiritual life. Spiritual living is the answer. Alcoholism is the problem. So, step ten is a great way to take everything that we've learned and apply it in a reactive way. *"Love and tolerance of others is our code."*

Love and tolerance of others is not something that many of us were thinking about when we were drinking and it certainly wasn't something that we were thinking in early sobriety.

If you could learn tolerance, you can get to serenity. If you can learn love, you can add an incredible capacity to the joy of living. So, these are all things that are going to be helpful to us. It's an effective way of living that will bring you in touch with and in tune with a power that is going to enable you to be and do practically anything you want to do in your life.

The people that ask you for help are usually not the people you would want to ask you for help. They're usually embroiled in an incredible amount of drama and dysfunction. But, when you shift your perspective from what you can get to what you can give, is when your whole perception changes. That's part of the spiritual awakening, all of a sudden, you awaken to the fact that you are not an island; that the whole universe does not revolve around you. That there are other people out there and there are ways that you really need to be of help. Let's say you're in a twelve step fellowship...one of the saddest things that you'll see is somebody saying, "I needed a meeting so bad." When you have a spiritual awakening, it's not like we needed to get to a meeting because we need one so bad. It's more like, I need to get to a meeting because there's probably somebody there that needs me a whole lot. When you go to give instead of go to get, that's part of the spiritual awakening.

Here are the tenth step promises, and again, there's a lot of times there will be meeting topics that will be on the ninth step promises. Rarely do you hear topics that are tenth step promise meeting topics. That's because not a lot of people complete their amends. Not a lot of people are fearless and thorough about this whole process. But these are some great promises. These really are the alcoholism promises. Now understand that this book was written for the hopeless alcoholic, the alcoholic that the treatment centers can't help. The treatment centers cannot recover these people. These are the people who go to twelve and fifteen treatment centers and continue to drink. They drink on the way home from the treatment centers. That's the type of individual this book was written for. Now, with that in mind, taking that in context, let's look at these promises and just see how just remarkable they are.

*"And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol."* We've given up the fight. We're not fighting anybody. We're not fighting our family. We're not fighting our boss. We're not fighting our neighbors. We're not fighting the Republican or Democratic Party. We're not fighting anything any more. We're not even fighting alcohol. Remember how we used to fight to try to, like, "I'm not going to drink. I'm not going to drink this weekend." It was a struggle. And you'd usually end up drinking.

*"For by this time, sanity will have returned."*

Sometimes people take the promises literally before they've even got them. There are some promises in this book that you can go and you can do anything and you can go anywhere, even to the most sordid spots on earth, even to the plain old whoopee parties, which is just basically a drinking party. There are promises in here that say, however, there's a qualification. There's sometimes more than one qualification. The qualification basically is, is your spiritual house in order? Have you gone through these steps? Have you made your amends? Are you working with others? And then the other qualification is, what are your motives? What are your motives for doing that? Is it a selfish motive, "I just want to go and rip some vicarious pleasure out of this event", or is it, "I'm going there to be helpful"? I'm going there to bring and not take. Most the time, when people get into trouble using those promises literally, they're using them before they have them. By the time you are free enough to go to a drinking party if you want to, you most likely don't want to unless there's like a, it's part of a twelve step call.

Some of us have gone to bars or into crack houses, pulling somebody out on a twelve step call, but do we go and sit in the crack house to watch somebody smoke crack? That would be the last thing we would want to do now. Another issue is so many people are two steppers. There's step one and there's step twelve, if you don't have the other ten steps, you're not going to be very effective and it's going to be very dangerous for you to do those kind of things. You can take the step literally when you've taken the step. Don't use pieces of this book as justification for your own selfish behavior. That's a recipe for disaster.

*"For by this time, sanity will have returned."* That's a good promise. The sanity that they speak to is what they talked about in the second step – return us to sanity – which is in reference to the strange mental blank spot that happens before we put a drink or a drug in our body, that subtle form of insanity that precedes the first drink. "Suddenly" hits us and we're drinking and using. Sanity will have returned. We're not going to be susceptible to finding ourselves drunk or high again.

Sanity will have returned. We're going to be able to think sanely and normally about those substances. That's a wonderful promise. *"We will seldom be interested in liquor."* We may have drunk dreams. We may even think, "Today is a wonderful day...I used to love cracking a beer on a day like today." We may have thoughts like that, but we will be able to follow them through to the conclusion that, "It's too bad I can never put alcohol in my body again. It's too bad I cannot handle drugs and can't do them." We will be able to think the thought through.

A lot of people say, "Think the drink through." You hear that all the time. You can't do that until you're on step ten. Before then, thinking the drink through is not a useful deterrent. Thinking the drink through is not a defense against drinking until you've completed the first nine steps and you're on step ten. You hear so many things in fellowship meetings that you don't have the power to apply, and that's one of them. You hear, "keep your memory green"...you can't do that until you're on step ten, so we should stop telling people to do that and actually help them through the first nine steps.

*"If tempted, we recoil from it as if from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, we will find that this has happened automatically."* We don't go after drugs or alcohol in a frontal assault. What we do is we work on our spiritual condition and our relationship with God and then we find that the problem has been solved automatically because of our spiritual work. *"We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes. That is the miracle of it. We're not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we've been placed in a position of neutrality, safe and protected. We've not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed."* Our drinking problem will be removed by step ten. *"It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition."* That is the key, right there, to keep in fit spiritual condition.

The problem is going to be removed, we can't remove the alcohol problem on our own. God has to, but what we need to do is we need to keep participating as much as we possibly to stay fit as far as our spiritual condition is concerned. "God will not render us white as snow without our cooperation". That's a line out of the Twelve and Twelve. So we need to ask, how then shall we cooperate? We need to cooperate by maintaining our spiritual condition. That's something that we can do. God will give us power to do that if we ask. God, please give me the strength and direction to keep myself spiritually fit today. That's a prayer that's going to get answered. Once the spirit is awakened, the spirit's not going to let you go back and drink and drug. You can only do that with a spirit that's asleep.

We've lived on self-will and because we've operated on a very selfish and self-centered foundation, what we've done is we've put our spirit to sleep. And the spiritual awakening is the treatment for alcoholism, it's the treatment for drug addiction, with this you can have permanent recovery. You can be permanently recovered from this. There's no cure, per se, but being in a recovered state is absolutely possible. Many people are experiencing it today. It's so difficult when you're trying to explain this to people because it's such an experience and sometimes trying to quantify an experience is a difficult thing to do. When you look at all the statistics out there from professionals in treatment, how detailed some of the science is as far as the addiction science. However, they've never really been able to do accurate scientific studies on a spiritual awakening, because it's an experience. It's not a set of laws or numbers.

One real challenge is when talking to people in a detox it's very difficult to explain the spiritual awakening. It's very difficult to explain what we mean by being in a state called recovered, because it's an experience. It's very; very difficult to talk to them about this if they haven't experienced it themselves. Somebody that's gone through the twelve steps can talk to somebody else that's gone through the twelve steps and they understand immediately that they are on the same wavelength. They're coming from the same platform.

We will talk to **people** and explain to them that we have a deep and effective relationship with God and we receive the power that you get from that. But talking to somebody that still has a spirit that's asleep is sometimes a difficult thing to do. It's difficult to connect with them. There are two things that go on today in the recovery fellowships. One of them is the spirit of the fellowship and that's where everybody is attending meetings saying, "Yay, yay, we don't drink today" and "Let's make some more coffee", but at a much deeper level is the fellowship of the spirit. The people who are living in that spiritual dimension after experiencing the steps can connect to each other at a deep level.

Some people get confused with the semantics of recovery and recovered. Most of our friends introduce themselves wherever they go as recovered alcoholics. Some of us don't do it and it's a personal choice, what we don't want to do is to shut their mind at anything that we are going to say. And if you misunderstand what we mean by recovered, you may not want to listen to any other thing that we say. But there's over thirty places in this book that explain that we are recovered with an 'ed'.

Now it depends on how you define recovered, what many of us say is "I'm not cured but I'm recovered." The difference between being cured and recovered is this, let's say you have pancreatic cancer and you go in for a treatment and you are cured. That means that the pancreatic cancer is gone. It doesn't exist. You do not have cancer any more. That's not what happens to us as alcoholics, because if we take the first drink, whether we're spiritually fit or not, it's going to create the phenomenon of craving and we're going to end up getting drunk. We're not cured because there is still a part of our alcoholism that's active and always will be. We cannot tolerate alcohol in any form at all, our ability to process alcohol, but we can be recovered. If you have pancreatic cancer and you're recovered from it that means the symptoms have been removed. So, with a recovered alcoholic, the symptoms of alcoholism have been removed.

The symptomology is the defective relationships, the mental obsession, the resentment, the shame, the fear, the guilt, remorse...those are gone. We have recovered; we don't suffer from those any more. The symptoms of our alcoholism have been removed. But many of us don't identify ourselves that way at a treatment center or in meetings because we

don't want to shut somebody's mind off to us prior to my sharing our experience, strength and hope. But that's a personal choice. Many of our friends want people to know that they're recovered, so that if anybody wants what they have, they'll know they're individuals that actually have an answer. But if someone thinks that you're always recovering...let's look at that for a moment. Say you have pancreatic cancer and you're in the recovery room in the hospital...what does that mean? That means that you're not in an acute situation any more. You're not in the ICU. You're in the recovery room but you're still getting better and you're still showing all kinds of signs of the illness. So, I don't introduce myself as a recovering alcoholic because that would mean I'm really still sick. That's not an accurate representation of a recovered alcoholic. Certainly if we put alcohol back in our body, the phenomenon of craving will take over and we will end up getting drunk. But the fact of the matter is after the step work we been restored to sanity. We are not going to put the alcohol back in our body as long as we stay spiritually fit, a day at a time, but we are recovered.

The people who want to argue that fact with you are two people. People who have never gone through the steps and are still fighting alcohol every day of their life, hanging on by a thread, or they're people who misunderstand what the big book means by recovered. And another strange fact is people who identify themselves as recovering alcoholics, usually aren't, especially the people that say, "I'm a slowly recovering alcoholic". We take these promises seriously. These are gifts. These are wonderful promises that are offered to us for doing some spiritual work with God's help and we take them seriously and can offer that to the newcomer as some hope.

The worst thing you can do is just tell somebody, "Just don't drink and just don't drug, no matter what." When somebody says that, "That's not good enough." There was at least some kind of payoff for us using drugs or alcohol. We couldn't stand sobriety and we needed something, a vacation from our emotional condition because we just couldn't stand sobriety. It was untenable for us. So if you just tell someone to not drink and not drug, you're not offering them enough. There's not enough payoff for them. We know what sobriety is like. Sobriety is horrible. Recovery is another ballgame. You need to offer somebody a reasonable alternative to sobriety and that's being in the state called recovered. That is all they were looking for in drugs and alcohol to begin with, just being at perfect peace and ease.

*"Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed direction, we have begun to sense the flow of His spirit into us. To some extent, we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense, but we must go further and that needs more action."* Let's look at some of these promises, these are the getting the power from God promises. The flow of His spirit into us and we've begun to develop a God-consciousness and it's become a sixth sense.

Where is the number one place you're going to find twelve step fellowships meeting at? You find them in churches, because this mission of recovery fellowships is supported by a lot of ministers and priests. These ministers are upstairs and they're basically helping to save the saved. Everyone is saved and they're talking, "We're being saved. We're being saved." A lot of important work is going on down in the basement with recovery fellowships to save more souls. If you get to the point in step ten here, you're pretty much saved from alcoholism, but if you start to feel the flow of God's spirit into you, become God-conscious and it becomes part of your sixth sense, you start to receive strength, inspiration and direction from the God who has all knowledge and power, what is that but being reborn? What is that but being saved? Ministers and priests, the people who host the twelve step meetings for ten dollars a week which doesn't even cover the heat for the room, they do that because they understand some real serious spiritual work is going on in the basement and they support it. They support it because they know sometimes we can touch these people who are lost, who are destitute, sometimes we can touch these people and get them ready to be upstairs. Even ministers, priests or rabbis who don't have experience with addictive illness, they still recognize the power of what's going on downstairs.

There's nothing in our life that has been more important than seeking, and finding that strength and inspiration from He who has all power. It's answered all of our problems, not just our alcohol problems, all of our problems.

### Into Action (Step 11)

So often fellowship slogans are misunderstood or misapplied. One that you hear all the time is, I don't drink One Day at a Time, we're supposed to live life one day at a time and quit for good and for all. If we were to plan one day at a time, our bosses would fire us, we would not do what we needed to do to meet our financial commitments. So often those slogans are thrown around like they're the be all and end all's, and they only point you in the direction of an attitude that you should have. We shouldn't regret the past nor should we shut the door on it. We shouldn't have anxiety or fear about the future. If we're practicing a program diligently, we'll get to a point where we don't suffer from those things and that allows us to live in the now, to really enjoy the present which is what we have. We've got the present. We don't have the future yet. The past is gone. Where we live is in the right now. And I think that was the attitude that they were looking for us to have in the slogan one day at a time. I don't think they wanted us to use it as an excuse not to do things.

We've been pretty meticulous in going through this book. We've dissected it sentence by sentence so that we wouldn't miss anything. This is a program for a methodology of life. It's an explanation of how to live spiritually. And there are only a few chapters that really hold the keys to the twelve steps. We've been in How it Works and Into Action. We're going through it very carefully because we don't want anybody to miss some of the key ingredients in this way of life, because if you do, sometimes it's the weakest link in the chain that breaks. Same thing with the spiritual life, sometimes it's the things we hold onto or the practices that we don't master that will lead to the corrosion of our spiritual condition and us drinking again. So we're being very careful. We've gone through the first ten steps. We looked at step ten, a step

whereby we incorporate all the principles and spiritual direction as we live our life. It's a very reactive step so when we're out there at our job, or we're celebrating Christmas with the family, whatever other challenges that we may have, we're to try to apply these principles in our life rather than react the way we've been reacting for a long time.

The term repent is a wonderful term. It's been maligned over the years. There's been cartoons with people saying, "Repent! The end of the world is at hand!" Really, the original meaning of the word repent was to turn around, to change. One of the things that we have to do as alcoholics for any type of survival is we need to repent in the original meaning of the term. We need to turn around and we need to start doing things differently. The person who thinks that alcohol is the problem and as soon as they're not drinking any more, they'll be able to get on with their life is either a heavy drinker or a much deluded alcoholic. One of the reasons why the alcoholic drinks is because of the unmanageability that feeds into the spiritual malady and that unmanageability and spiritual malady is enveloping the alcoholic because of the way the alcoholic is living and thinking. So, you have two problems, you have drinking as your problem, and you have living as your problem. Now if it wasn't for those two things, we would probably be doing pretty well.

We really do need to start applying these. And as we apply them, it's a self-fulfilling type of endeavor. What happens is the more we apply, the more positive results we get. The more positive results we get, the more we want to apply. So really what we want to do is to get started on this. In step ten, it says, as we start to clean up the past, we start to use the disciplines of step ten and eleven. So often today when they say, "This is what we did" and "This is what we suggest", so many people think "they don't mean me."

"That's what those people need to do. That's what those people did." In the text from the original manuscript, it's very direct in who should be doing this, and because I think the prayer and the meditation disciplines have fallen so by the wayside. We say The Lord's Prayer if we're in a support group meeting and sometimes we'll do a little morning prayer in the morning. But in this modern day and age, we've lost so much because of our inability to develop disciplines in prayer and meditation.

, *"Step eleven suggests prayer and meditation. Don't be shy on this matter of prayer."* When many of us first came into the fellowship we were being told to pray. Many of us were embarrassed about that. Getting down on our knees and praying to God? We were incredibly fearful that someone might see us. The book is telling us not to be shy. Don't have any apprehension about this. This is a key to your freedom as a human going concern, so don't be shy. *"Better men than we are using it constantly. It works if you have the proper attitude and work at it."*

So, it's telling us to do something and we believe this is a textbook, this is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous, the foundational twelve step instruction manual for many other twelve step organization. Another organization may write a new book with the twelve steps in it and change it all around. If you want to have a real step experience, if you're in Clutterers Anonymous or whatever you're in you would benefit from going back to this book, because this is the foundational manual. If you don't do this it would be like somebody studying Christianity without ever going back to the Bible.

You need to consider this the foundational text, so it's telling us that we need to pray. *"It would be easy to be vague about this matter yet we believe we can give you some definite and valuable suggestions."* Prayer and meditation are so huge that this book really only introduces you to the type of prayer and the type of meditation that you need to start with. You can get involved in all kinds of disciplines as your spirituality grows in recovery and you can start developing your own prayers, or grab some prayers from the religious material that's been left behind over the last three thousand years, or you can study Eastern meditation techniques. You can study Christian centering meditation exercises. There are many directions you can go. But we like anybody that we work with to just do what it says in here for a while. This will help you build up a rudimentary discipline which is something that needs to follow with you the rest of your life. Often people will stagger back into treatment and say, "I relapsed, I relapsed." And if you ask them, "Well, tell me how much time you were spending every day on prayer and meditation." "Oh, well, not a whole lot." "Well, how much time were you spending on enlarging and perfecting your spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others?" "Oh, well, not really a lot." "Well, were you continuing to inventory your resentments, your fears and when you harmed other people?" "Oh, not really." "Well, then you were supposed to drink." There is actual work that you need to do if you're going to be saying you're working a twelve step program. So many people misunderstand the twelve steps especially people in twelve step fellowships. They've had fellowship based sobriety for a long, long time and they just don't know that more is available. More can be revealed. They haven't been paying attention. They've been going to calculus class and never opening the calculus textbook and they've been talking a lot about calculus and hanging out with calculus people, but they don't know calculus. It's the same thing in the fellowships. If you don't have specific experience with actually taking the instructions in this book, you don't have any experience with twelve step recovery. You just don't.

You may be sharing like a son of a gun in the meetings. You may have learned how to throw out every one-liner, every wisdom saying there is, you may have a whole bunch of sponsees following you around like little ducks, but you still don't know what you're doing. That's not a very popular message to bring to people's attention, but that fact of the matter is, it's absolutely true.

So many people will share, "My relationship with God is the most important relationship I have today". Go up to them after the meeting and ask them how much time they spent with that relationship today. If it truly is the most important relationship in your life, shouldn't you be acting as if it is? One of the things that will really show you just how deeply they were involve in step eleven back in the early days, prior to the writing of this book would be to do some Oxford Group studies. Every single one of them would gather their families together in morning quiet time to do their prayer and meditation. By studying some of those, you can get a really good glimpse of what these people were doing in the early

days. It was much more important for them to do morning meditation together than it would have been to go to a meeting. Today with the conventional wisdom that is mainly going through the twelve step fellowships, they would like you to think that the real requirement would be to attending meetings. Of course, that's important. No one would say that it wasn't. But if Doctor Bob could talk to us today, he would be telling us, "Well, how much time are you praying and meditating, young one? How much time are you spending working with others?" Those are the things that he would be asking us, not, "Did you get to ninety and ninety?" Prayer and the meditation is so important.

We can break the eleventh step down into three basic disciplines, upon awakening, as we move through the day, and when we retire at night. We're going to look at those three disciplines in step eleven by themselves, and the first one is upon awakening. This is what it says in the original manuscript. "*When you awake tomorrow morning, look back over the day before.*" That's a little contemplative exercise that you need to do. You need to look back on how I showed up yesterday, going through the day. "*Were you resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?*" So you need to answer those questions, you need to make note of them because this is very important. If you want to move away from the behavior that's contributing to your alcoholism, you need to know what that behavior is and you need to be participating with God in moving away from those behaviors.

"*Do you owe an apology?*" If you were selfish, if you were dishonest, or you were resentful, the answer to that is going to be yes. I owe an apology. I owe an amend. "*Have you kept something to yourself which should be discussed with another person at once?*" Some of our friends have a network, it's a phone network, and it's an at once network. In other words, when they're done with their eleventh step, upon awakening, when they have these things that crop up, they have a network of people that they can call and they can share their at-once. They're really following the advice in this book. If you have something that should be shared with someone at once, wouldn't it be beneficial to have someone that you can share that with?

Your sponsor may not like a call at eight o'clock in the morning because he may be at work. So it's doesn't say that you need to share this with a sponsor or spiritual advisor. You need to share this with someone else that's living on spiritual lines like you are. You can share it with a sponsor if you want.

So you need a network. "*Were you kind and loving toward all?*" That's a good question. Toward all..., were you kind and loving toward all? How about the person that was taking your parking space at the grocery store? How about the woman in front of you with the thirty-two items in the sixteen item lane? And who pays by check and has coupons and you're in a hurry? Were you kind and loving toward all? Most of us are going to answer no. No is not necessarily a bad answer.

There is no good or bad with how we answer this. We just need to understand that we're working on a path toward enlarging our spiritual life. We're trying to become better people. We're trying to turn around and act like people who are recovered. "*What could you have done better?*" That's a good one.

"*Were you thinking of yourself most of the time or were you thinking of what you could do for others, of what you could pack into the stream of life?*" We believe that the alcoholic is someone who has a foundation that's based on selfishness, self-centeredness and self-seeking. We come into the world operating from that foundation. There are a whole lot of exercises in here and the prayers are pointing us toward being of help to others. So we need to always be asking ourselves, have we been helpful to others? Or was all we were doing today, was that all about us? And again, there's no right or wrong answer. There's just the truthful answer, we need to pay attention to that answer and we need to keep moving forward. And about packing things into the stream of life, one of the great promises in this step is we're going to become more efficient. Becoming more efficient means we can get a lot more done because we're not burning up energy foolishly, being wrapped around our character defects.

We should be packing as much into the stream of life as we can. "*After you have faced yesterday, ask God's forgiveness for any wrongs.*" That's a prayer directive. "*Ask to be shown what to do.*" There is another prayer directive. "*Thus you keep clean as you live each day.*" So we would say for anyone who's just beginning the disciplines of step eleven, write down the instructions. Break them out of the book if you have to. Number them if you have to. And be conscious of them. Put them on a card in your wallet. Pull them out every once in awhile. Keep asking yourself these questions and developing these disciplines until they become second nature. Once they've become second nature, you are in the realm of the spirit. You are going to be incredibly efficient and you are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

"*Think about the twenty-four hours ahead. Consider your plans for the day. Before you begin, ask God to guide your thinking. Especially ask that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.*" These are things that we do every single morning.

Before you begin, ask God to guide your thinking. Ask Him to divorce you from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. "*Then go ahead and use your common sense.*" "*There is nothing hard or mysterious about this. God gave you brains to use. Clear your thinking of wrong motives. Your thought life will be placed on a much higher plane. In thinking through your day, you may be faced with indecision. You may not be able to determine which course to take. Here you ask God for inspiration, intuitive thought, or a decision. Relax and take it easy. Don't struggle. Ask God's help. You will be surprised how the right answers come after you have practiced a few days. What used to be a hunch or occasional inspiration becomes a working part of your mind. Being still inexperienced and just making your contact with God, it is not probable that you are going to be divinely inspired all the time. That would be a large piece of conceit for which you may pay in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless you will find that your thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration and guidance. You will come to rely upon it. This is not weird or silly. Most psychologists pronounce these methods sound.*" Remember earlier on when it said you have entered the realm of the spirit, the fourth dimension of reality. They talk about those concepts. This is a great paragraph that describes how we

access that fourth dimension reality, intuitive capacity, to be able to hear God

A funny thing that we sometimes tell people that we are working with early on is, "Don't just do something, stand there." Because so often, they're pre-programmed, their default setting is to do something selfish or do something in a reactive way that's counter-productive to the situation. If you do relax and take it easy and ask God for a thought or an inspiration or a decision, it's going to come to you in that intuitive part of your consciousness, it's going to feel right, so you'll go ahead and do it that way, things will work out and you will come to rely upon this method of operation.

God gave us brains to use. He gave us an intuitive capacity. He gave us reasoning and reaction and the ability to have cognitive thought. We need to learn to use them and align them with the will of God. And if we can do that, we are going to be placed on the plane of inspiration. We are going to be inspired.

If it's all about being effective, packing things into the stream of life, working and self-sacrificing for others, then we need to be able to do that without playing spiritual make-believe. Many people we knew when we first got involved in twelve step fellowships, had great jobs and everything, but they started to get spiritual and they started to think, "Man, my work environment is just not conducive to a spiritual life" and they walked away from, or got fired from, or laid off from some strong employment that really helped out their family and the people that depended upon them. They went to the coffee shop where they could talk about recovery all day long and got on unemployment so that they could be spiritual. People like that miss the boat.

We need to be out there. We need to be out there banging heads and sometimes we need to be in a bad job because that's where the lessons are going to be for us. Sometimes we make a good decision to leave that bad job. God gave us brains to use in an intuitive capacity and we have to start using it. *"You might conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that you might be shown all through the day what your next step is to be, that he give you whatever you need to take care of every situation. Ask especially for freedom from self-will. Be careful to make no requests for yourself only. You may ask for yourself, however, if others will be helped. Never pray for your own selfish ends. People waste a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why."* They don't want us to have selfish prayers.

Certainly if I'm praying for my health and there's a lot of people depending upon me, that's not necessarily a selfish prayer. If I'm praying to get the blonde and the Ferrari, that's whole different story.

*"Certainly we can pray for ourselves if others will be helped."* But spiritual make-believe would be "I'm praying to win the hundred million dollar lottery because I'll help a lot of people with the money."

*"If circumstances warrant, ask your wife or a friend to join you in morning meditation. If you belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, be sure to attend to that also."* Understand that it says also, so many people want to do it instead of. Many of our friends in recovery are Christian, but one of the scariest things we see is when they get so involved in church that they really think the twelve step process is a pagan activity and they've found the truth. A lot of times, they get drunk and we see them back in the meeting. How did that work for you? Absolutely if you're devout and you have a faith system, please go do the best you can with it and make it part of your soul. But if you're an alcoholic, understand that God gave these twelve steps to us in a spiritual capacity and we think that that's what God wants you to do. Not run off and speak in tongues somewhere. If you're an alcoholic, you better be about this stuff, and then you can be about other things.

*"If you are not a member of a religious body, you might select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing."* That's what Bill did with the prayer to St. Francis in the twelve and twelve. He felt that that was conducive to the spiritual principles that were working for alcoholics so he put it in the twelve and twelve. There are many great prayers, please use them. Find ones that work for you. Find ones that may be addressing the certain types of character defects you have and use those. *"There are many helpful books also."*

There are wonderful books out there and alcoholics have gone through them all. We may have started off in real bizarre ways. Many of us started by reading a lot of new age literature, and it sounded wonderful. Many times it was just regurgitated spiritual concepts with new architecture and every single one of these books can sound like a big answer, but may not be applicable. Many of us were also helped by these books. Some of us find a lot of my comfort in the masters in Christianity, some real wonderful people who have been in Christianity. But we may also read books about Sufism and Buddhism, or the indigenous American Indian traditions. We can find a lot of wisdom and comfort in those but nothing has been as profound as this book, because this book has been transformational in so many of our lives.

We don't need more knowledge. Self-knowledge is not an answer, is not a defense against the first drink. You can't learn your way out of alcoholism. You have to act your way out of alcoholism.

*"If you do not know of any, ask your priest, minister or rabbi."* Notice those are religious people that you're supposed to ask for suggestions. *"Be quick to see where people are right. Make use of what they have to offer."* And remember Bill was, in the beginning very prejudiced against organized religion. He got over that prejudice fairly quickly and recognized the fact that the spirituality he needed to access was being practiced by religious people. He started to get religious, spiritual advisors, like Sam Shoemaker and Father Ed Dowling. He went to these people on a regular basis to learn spiritual principles and concepts from them.

*"As you go through the day, pause when you're agitated and doubtful."* So when you're agitated and doubtful, what are you supposed to do, pause. *"Be still and ask for the right thought and action. It will come. Remind yourself, you are no longer running the show."* Remember our third step decision.

*"Humbly say to yourself many times each day, 'Thy will be done.'"* The next time somebody relapses and comes into your group, ask them how many times a day were they saying, "Thy will be done?" They'll look at you like you're crazy but that's an instruction here. Many times each day we are supposed to be saying this. If you're not saying this, you're

not paying attention to the twelve step recovery process. *"You will be in much less danger of excitement, fear, worry, self-pity or foolish decision."* Those are all things we would like to avoid.

Being excited doesn't do any good. Having fear, unless our life is in danger, does not help either, and it's usually anxiety that we feel.

So fear, anger, worry, self-pity or foolish decisions are things we want to avoid. When we're agitated or doubtful, we pause. Be still. Ask for the right thought or action and then listen to that intuitive capacity you're trying to develop. You will be in much less danger of these things if you do that. *"You will become much more efficient."* These are the eleventh step promises. *"You will not tire easily for you will not be burning up energy foolishly as you did when you were trying to arrange life to suit yourself. It works, it really does. Try it. We alcoholics are undisciplined."* *"Let God discipline you in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all – there is action and more action."*

*"Faith without works is dead."* Just having faith and not getting out there and helping other people, that's death for us. We can't just get it and the heck with all the other people. We need to be about the Father's work, carrying this message to other people.

There's a lot of conventional wisdom in the twelve step fellowships today. It's appeared for whatever reason, because it's the easier, softer way, because people found it convenient, because they brought it in from bad treatment centers, for whatever reason, there is some really, really bad conventional wisdom out there. *"What works? We shall treat them in the next chapter, which is entirely devoted to step twelve. If we're saying faith without works is dead, what kind of works are they talking about? We shall treat those works in the next chapter which is entirely devoted to step twelve."* How powerful is that? They took that out of the first printing.

But they're going to tell you what works you need to be about. In the early days, they found the people who were staying sober were the people who were working with others. And the people who were also developing spiritual discipline. If you're suffering from a progressively fatal illness called alcoholism where you're going to end up drinking yourself to death, you need to be paying attention to that, I think we'd be paying attention very closely to a path that when on, rarely seen someone fail, we should be asking ourselves how then shall we fully follow that path.

## Working With Others 1

All the way through my recovery journey, many of us have a sense of peace; comfort and gratitude come over us. We get encouraged in spiritual and intuitive ways to keep going the way we're going. It's encouragement to let us know that then things that are going on our life are infinitely better than they could be. If we have followed directions up to the chapter "Working with Others", we've had a spiritual awakening. At this point in time, we can intuitively know how to handle situations or newcomers that used to baffle us. At this point in time, we have not completely finished our preparation, because that's a lifetime job, but we're now ready to go out and seek people that we can help. We can bring them into the fellowship we crave and we can help them escape the alcoholic trap that so many of us were in for so long. In this chapter there's going to be a staggering amount of instructions, the directions we're supposed to take.

One of the things that we think is so lacking in any of the twelve step fellowships is adherence to and understanding of what this chapter is telling us to do. If everyone that got into a twelve step fellowship followed chapter seven and made it part of their operational methodology, we think we could almost wipe out addiction for the people who want help. And right now there are so many people who do want help but they're confused and caught up in so many different things. Here are so many different ways, and directions, and processes being offered up, that it's, sometimes it's kind of difficult to find the right path out of that addictive illness.

*"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion...carry this message to other alcoholics. You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence with others fail. Remember they are very ill."* Imagine any other illness that is a progressively fatal illness that's going to end up killing you. Imagine reading something at a doctor's office that says our experience shows that you will be immune from this particular disease or illness if you comply with a certain program. There are not a lot of people that would balk at doing whatever the pamphlet said for you to do. If it meant their survival, if it meant them escaping a progressively fatal illness they would grab hold of it and make it the main priority in their lives. Yet so many people who are struggling their way sober and trying to figure out what to do with their lives miss this. They miss this twelfth suggestion.

It works when other activities fail. There are high points and there are low points in someone's sobriety. There are times when we're all in the barrel. There are times when we're having relationship difficulties, employment difficulties, and economic difficulties. A lot of times what happens is the real negative emotions that we are sometimes susceptible to throw us back into the arms of alcohol. If we don't have something that we can do, an action that we can take, sometimes those negative emotions just pile up on us, become astonishingly difficult to solve, we end up with the obsession of the mind, we end up back drinking.

We have seen step twelve work for countless people, if you're involved in actively carrying the message, whether it's to an institution, whether it's to support groups, no matter where it is, if you're really active doing that, we don't see those people drinking as long as they're consistent with that activity.

It says you can help when no one else can. The author had an experience one time at a treatment center where most of the counselors were alcoholics. One time a counselor was doing group, where you all sit down in a circle and you

complain about what's going on in your head. She identified herself in a very strange way "I'm so-and-so, I'm an adult child of an alcoholic." And then she goes on to start group, and he was thinking, "That's pretty bizarre." He was thinking, I'm an adult alcoholic of a librarian but I don't start every sentence that way. What is she talking about? She asked him one time "Well, tell me...are you happy, mad, sad or glad?" He was like a week off of twenty years of drinking. He couldn't pick his emotions out of the morass of his mind, it was like he had every negative emotion, threw it in a blender and I turned it on ten.

There was no differentiation; he didn't know what he was feeling. He was completely out of his mind. And she would call him out this way but he had a real disconnect from her. She could not get through to him. We are not saying that non-alcoholics can't get through to alcoholics, but this particular one didn't. He sensed no identification with her. There was some identification with the alcoholic counselors and they're the ones that were really able to help him. The ones who he knew had experienced some of the things that he had experienced and their lives were better now. They could help when no one else could.

The book also talks about alcoholics, it says, "They are very ill." There's a real controversy today about alcoholism being a disease. The American Medical Association said it was a disease in the mid-50s but there's still a lot of controversy about it. What this book tells us is that we have an illness, that we're very ill. Some alcoholics seem to like that a little bit more than a disease. Certainly we are ill. We're ill mentally. We're ill spiritually. We're ill physically. There's no doubt about that, so it's appropriate to use the word ill. But it brings about a sense of controversy many of us like to avoid.

Promises are spread throughout this chapter. "*Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends, this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.*" That's the difference between recovered and sober, frequent contact with newcomers was not really the highlight of our life when we were sober. It certainly wasn't the bright spot of our life hearing some knucklehead with a week out of detox telling us what he thought, but today it really is a high point in some of our lives because we are not coming there to get. We are going there to give.

Here is where it starts telling us where are we going to find these alcoholics, remember there were only two meetings, two groups of alcoholics that were meeting together when this book was written. Little things were starting up but there were two main groups, Akron and New York. They expected this book to be mailed out and people to find mail order recovery. That's what it was written for and that's what they expected. It turned out a little different. It turned out that the message was better passed one alcoholic to another than by mail. However, there have been a lot of recoveries based just on exposure to this book. A lot of groups have sprung up in different areas because they got access to this book, and just did what it said, and then built the fellowship up around them. But this is going to give us some instructions for where we're going to find these alcoholics to carry this message to. This message is, "I've taken the first eleven steps, I've had a spiritual awakening, I'm recovered from alcohol...would you like to do that"? That really is the message. Strange as it may sound, at present with Alcoholics Anonymous World Service this message can be confused. If you were to write to New York right now and ask them, "What is the message?", the answer that they will give you is "whatever you want it to be in your group." That's a very, very unfortunate position that they're taking because if you've been to some of the groups some of us have been to, that's a pretty scary perspective. The blind can be leading the blind, you may not have recovered alcoholics who have done the steps, you may only have people maintaining a tenuous sobriety.

On some of the earlier dust jackets it said the message of Alcoholics Anonymous is in this text book. It's the twelve steps. We still believe that's what you're supposed to do when you're carrying the message, to carry the message of the spiritual awakening, because that really is the treatment for alcoholism. Why this happens is probably a combination of a lot of the people in the main office not ever having a real experience with the twelve steps. If you went through there and you questioned the staff about their amends, "tell me about your amends...have you completed your amends"? "Give me a little bit of information on your prayer and meditation", "do you actively take people through the steps"?, you're probably not going to get the answer that you would hope for.

A decision was made long ago at GSO that they want the door to be as open as possible. They don't want to create any internal controversy. They really report to the groups, so because of the upside-down triangle structure, they just don't want to take a stand on it. We think it's worth taking a stand on. If we lose the twelve steps as the message that we're supposed to carry, we're going to become more and more ineffective and there's going to be more and more members drinking.

: "*Perhaps you are not acquainted with any drinkers who want to recover. You can easily find some by asking a few doctors, ministers, priests or hospitals.*" Remember you're looking for the ones who want to recover. "*They will be only too glad to assist you. Don't start out as an evangelist or reformer. Unfortunately, a lot of prejudice exists. You will be handicapped if you arouse it. Ministers and doctors are competent and you can learn much from them if you wish, but it happens that because of your own drinking experience, you can be uniquely useful to other alcoholics. So cooperate, never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim.*" This chapter reflects a lot of the stuff that was going on in Akron at that time. Akron's ties to religion and to Christianity were incredibly strong, more so than in New York.

Bill was always trying to find a middle ground between New York and Akron. It's an oversimplification to say New York was filled with atheists and Akron was filled with evangelists. But there is some truth to that. Akron was a lot more effective at keeping people sober than New York was, and still is. If we were going to land in one of those two cities and have to go to meetings to stay sober, we would rather land in Akron than New York any time.

*When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him.*" Now this is important. Let's

say you get a phone call...."Hey, our father is drinking himself to death" or "my brother is in real trouble", it's a good idea to ask a lot of questions. When you approach someone, you want them to be able to identify at the highest level possible. The more identification, the more trust there will be. They'll start to become convinced that you can help, so if you know about what type of drinking they have, about some of the experiences they've had, you can share similar experiences and be able to identify at a deeper level. *"If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity."* In our early sobriety many of us were trying to get people sober who had no real interest in getting sober. What you can be doing is spoiling a later opportunity.

When alcohol really does get their attention, they'll remember some knucklehead trying to talk them into something that they didn't want to do or didn't understand or didn't believe in. We want to find the people who honestly want to stop drinking. In the twelve step meetings today, they're flooded with people from rehabs and detoxes. That does not mean those individuals want to stop drinking. Just because you're in treatment, that's certainly not an indication that you want to stop drinking. A lot of times your family wants you to stop drinking or your boss wants you to stop drinking. Now, wanting to stop drinking for good and for all is not something everyone is going to identify with, but it's telling us to look for those individuals. They're going to be easier to work with; they're going to be more willing to go through the twelve step process. If you find somebody that just wants to stay sober and their reaction is, "oh my god, those steps,? Not for me...that's crazy", we're not supposed to work with them. If they're not really serious about stopping and willing to take the twelve steps, we're really not supposed to work with them. A majority of people that show up as newcomers don't want to go through the steps and they probably won't. Those are people that we're not supposed to spend our time with.

It doesn't mean that we can't be friendly and we can't be helpful. We're just not supposed to waste a lot of time with them because the time that we spend can be better used with someone who knows they're in real trouble and really wants a solution. Those are the people we can really help.

Today we end up with so many people in the fellowship who really aren't alcoholics. They haven't lost power, choice and control to the point where they would need a spiritual awakening to recover. We know this because they wouldn't be sitting in the meeting sober week after week after week if they without the need for a recovery program if they were alcoholics. You get a huge watering down over time of people who really were alcohol abusers, not alcohol-dependent, who show up in the meetings. Many of them do not work with others. But when you go through these steps, you want to sponsor.

If you have an AA area that's like that, you got to step up, you need to take people through the steps and hopefully what happens is that the people you sponsor become experienced, now you're building up a fellowship about you of experienced who can now shoulder some of the burden.

There are two things you can do. You can carry somebody to the message or you can carry the message to them. To carry somebody to the message, all you need to do is bring them to a meeting, tell them to keep coming back; you can hit them with all the happy little slogans. That's really encouraging someone to stay sober. But to carry the message to an alcoholic is to use the message inherent in this book and in the twelve steps. If you want to carry the message to the alcoholic, which is what they're telling us to do, you have to have the message to carry. There's very few people who actually went through the steps that don't work with other people. It just doesn't happen. Because there's an inner drive to carry this message once you've had a spiritual awakening.

If somebody just never, ever sponsors, never wants to, we question that they've had a spiritual awakening as the result of the twelve steps. Because that's just not how you end up at the end of the steps. You would automatically have a desire to want to share that with other people that are hurting. You've just been placed on a completely new footing on life. Things are becoming really wonderful for you in a number of different ways, especially the internal wonderful ways, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and you are driven to be of help. You will recognize that by being of help, you are ensuring your immunity to alcohol and you're improving your own spiritual condition.

We question the people that just sit in the fellowship meetings and don't do anything, just show up once a week to grumble a little bit put a dollar in the basket and have a bad cup of coffee. What is that? That hasn't been our experience today. Before we had gone through the steps, we may have been one of those people but we were not going to last very long that way. We were going to end up drinking again, killing our self or go insane, because that's what happens to alcoholics without some transformational spiritual experience.

*"This advice is given for his family too. They should be patient, realizing they are dealing with a sick person."* A lot of times families will really push up on somebody and what this book is saying is that may not be the best strategy. It says wait for them to go on a bender. Wait for them to hit bottom again. Wait for them to come out of one more blackout with one more summons in their pocket for a DUI. Then they may be more receptive to talking to somebody like you. They're not supposed to plead hysterically with them, remember, frothy emotional appeal seldom suffices.

*"But if there is any indication that he wants to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in him, usually his wife. Get an idea of his behavior, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition and his religious leanings."* *"You need this information to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if the tables were turned."* This is like doing your due diligence before a sales call. Let's say you're a big corporate salesman and you're about to go sell to XYZ Corporation. You want to know as much as you can about XYZ Corporation to be able to handle the sales call. Well, it's the same thing with us. We are discovering a prospect, we're going to them, we're trying to identify and to do that, and we need to know as much as we can about them. Then we put the bait on the hook. And the bait on the hook is, "I was like you, I'm recovered, my life is wonderful now, there are so many great things that are going on" then they're going to be curious and maybe interested. So it is the same type of approach as you'd do with

a sales call.

*"Sometimes it is wise to wait 'til he goes on a binge. The family may object to this, but unless he is in a dangerous physical condition, it is better to risk it."* When somebody has gone on a binge and comes out of that binge, pitifully and incomprehensibly demoralized, it's a wonderful time to say, "Well, are you done yet? Do you want help now?" They're softened up a little bit by alcohol. Alcohol is the great persuader, sometimes we don't need to persuade anybody. Alcohol is the great persuader.

We have to use tact and common sense when we're doing this and the best way to learn how to do it is to do it. We have made a lot of mistakes working with people and sometimes you learn from your mistakes. Mistakes aren't always bad. A lot of times they make you feel uncomfortable enough that you're going to pay attention and the next time and become a little bit better at it.

As the co-founders learned to do this sometimes drunks would get violent. There was someone that chased Lois Wilson around their apartment with a pair of scissors. It even says that we may need to fight with these alcoholics, but working with the family was a big part of their experience; remember the first person we approach is the spouse or close friend of the person. We're trying to engage the family in this recovery process and we have found that where there's a cooperative family, the outcomes are much higher for the alcoholic.

Now there may not be as much reason to engage the family after the person starts to get their one-year coin, two-year coin, things have calmed down, you've got them through the steps, and it may just be a social or friendly type of communication. But there's a lot of times you get a call from a family saying, "Oh my god, he's going crazy! Could you please help?" Grab a couple of the boys and go help. That's what the book is telling you to do. You should always have somebody with you. Do not go on any type of twelve step call where there's even a hint of possible violence without overwhelming numbers. There have been people that have been killed on twelve step calls when they've gone there by themselves or they get there and the guy's cleaning his gun in a blackout. We don't do this stuff to get killed.

We need to be rational and reasonable about it. But if a drunk is ripping the pictures off the wall and throwing the furniture around and you've developed a relationship with the family, get some of the boys and go over there. If you have to call the police, call the police. Do whatever you need to do to ensure the family's safety and then visit the drunk when they get released from custody.

*"Don't deal with him when he's very drunk or ugly unless his family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let his family or a friend ask if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so."* This is not what happens a lot of times in the recovery meetings today. "We quit drinking one day at a time. If somebody told me I was going to have to quit for good when I walked in the first time, I'd have walked right out the door." Remember we're not supposed to work with somebody unless they want to quit for good and for all and they're willing to go to any extreme to do so.

This is a qualifier. What we like to do is leave them with the book on the first visit. Let them read the book. Now when you ask them, are they willing to go to any lengths, they're going to know what any lengths looks like. We like people to understand what any extreme or any length actually means. Hopefully you can do that with your first or second visit with an alcoholic prospect. *"If he says yes, then his attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered. You should be described to him as one of a fellowship who, as part of their own recovery, try to help others and who will be glad to talk to him if he cares to see you. If he does not want to see you, never force yourself upon him. Neither should the family hysterically plead with him to do anything nor should they tell him much about you. They should wait for the end of his next drinking bout. You might place this book where he can see it in the interval. Here no specific rule can be given. The family must decide these things, but urge them not to be overanxious for that might spoil matters. Usually the family should not try to tell your story. Whenever possible, avoid meeting a man through his family. Approach through a doctor or institution is a better bet. If your man needs hospitalization, he should have it, but not forcibly unless he is violent. Let the doctor, if he will, tell him he has something in the way of a solution."* These are all things that you can use when you're doing these twelve step calls.

*"When your man is better"...after they've stopped shaking from the DT's..."the doctor might suggest a visit from you. Though you have talked with the family, leave them out of the first discussion. Under these conditions, your prospect will see he is under no pressure. He will feel he can deal with you without being nagged by his family. Call on him when he is still jittery. He may be more receptive when depressed."*

Today we have some good detoxes, good hospitals and good rehabs, and you probably should be on Librium or Ativan or something like that for a serious detox. We don't believe some of the half measures out there. We don't believe in watching for your triggers. I don't believe in that stuff. We believe in the fundamental psychic change that can be made possible by going through these steps. And that's what they're talking about in this chapter. *"See your man alone if possible."* That does not mean go on the twelve step call alone if there's any chance that it can get out of control. See the man alone means don't sit there with his family and do this twelve step call while his wife and his children are in the same room.

*"At first, engage in general conversation. After awhile turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will this get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit. But say nothing for the moment of how that was accomplished. If he's in a serious mood, dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralize or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his. When he sees you know all about the drinking game,*

*commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell him how baffled you were about how you couldn't separate, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist that leads to the first drink of a spree.* Refer to the strange mental blank spot. *"We suggest you do this as we have done in the chapter on alcoholism. If he is an alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own. If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady."* Remember, this is a self-diagnosed illness. But if you're working with somebody, it's telling you to be sure he is a real alcoholic. See if he fits the description.

*"Tell him from your own experience how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the willpower. Don't at this stage refer to this book unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it." And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion. If he sticks to the idea that he can still control his drinking, tell him that possibly he can if he's not too alcoholic. But if he is severely afflicted, there may be little chance he can recover by himself."* That's an interesting approach toward dealing with an alcoholic. This way cuts out a lot of nonsense. It cuts out working with the people who really aren't alcoholic, who are just going to screw you around. It cuts out wasting time with somebody that really doesn't want to stop drinking. It makes it so you are not wasting your time and you can move on to the next prospect, the next person who has a really good chance of getting through the steps and recovering from alcoholism.

There are a lot of people that die of alcoholism out there that don't have to. If there were informed sponsors or if there were informed professionals who really understood alcoholism and understood what approaches make the most sense and have the best outcomes, we think there's a lot more of us that would survive than are surviving now. We believe that if you've gotten through the steps, you can show someone else how and you can do that in a week or less. However, there are people with twenty years that really shouldn't be sponsoring. Because they're just encouraging you not to drink, that's not in any way enough. They're not offering you recovery from alcoholism, they're merely encouraging you not to drink. "Just keep going....keep going to meetings, boy." That's simple encouragement and that doesn't really work for a real alcoholic.

Now, how do you carry this message to another alcoholic if you haven't experienced this message? We don't think you can have a spiritual awakening as a result of steps you haven't taken, any more than you can come back from a place you've never been.

You can encourage somebody to want to stay sober, but our book tells us no amount of willpower can keep us from picking up the first drink. So if all we're doing is encouraging somebody not to drink and yet no amount of willpower will keep them from drinking, what are you really doing? We believe in offering somebody the recovery solution, the steps we have taken and help them to take those steps. Not everybody's going to get through the steps. A lot of people get somewhere into the steps and say, "This is an overreaction to a problem I really think I have under control." And nine times out of ten, they'll drink again and sometimes they'll come back and say, "Okay I need to finish this work, will you help?" This has happened to us many times, remember, alcohol is the great persuader.

Think about the experience these alcoholics had. Here's what they would do, Monday night they would get together at somebody's house and talk about "where are we going to go find prospects this week?" And sometimes they'd break up in teams; or they'd go on their own, and Tuesday they'd go out to the hospitals. They'd go out to the sanitariums. They'd go down to the bowery. They'd go to the missions. Wednesday, same thing, they'd go out looking for prospects, Thursday, same thing, looking for prospects, Friday, same thing, looking for prospects. Finally some of them have started to find prospects. What they would do is put them in the hospital, either Townes or St. Mary's in Akron or whatever.

And they'd ask the person, ".are you willing? Yes, I'm willing". Okay, you're going to stay a couple of days in the hospital. And then they'd get all the boys together and they'd start sending them in one at a time to tell their story, to identify and to talk about their recovery. By the time those people got out of the hospital, they were ready to start working the steps that they hadn't worked in the hospital. Now, that was how the week was laid out for these people prior to the writing of the book. For one reason or another, we all think we should do ninety and nineties. We should all go to a meeting every night. That's not what this book tells us to do. This book tells us to get out there and find prospects for Alcoholics Anonymous, to start to build up the fellowship you crave. There are alcoholics dying by the wayside, who need our help. Hiding out in meetings doing ninety and nineties, we don't know where that came from. That certainly didn't come from the text Alcoholics Anonymous. We have a feeling that misguided treatment protocols came up with that one.

They didn't even have ninety meetings back then. So there are a lot of things that have taken place in the fellowships today that are easier, softer ways that are more warm and fuzzy, but they pull us away from our primary purpose which is to stay sober and carry the message. Every one of us fall short every single day following those directions. But if we can just all get a little bit better at doing what it says in this chapter, fewer people are going to die.

We are all for those wisdom sayings and sober guidance, but again, that in itself is insufficient for a defense against alcohol if you're really alcoholic. It may help people who haven't gone down the scale too far to really talk about their feelings every night at a discussion meeting. That really may be a good thing for them. But what's going to happen is the low-bottom alcoholic's going to show up in that meeting and they aren't going to make it. They're going to look around and say, "These people are crazy. What is going on here?" There's going to be no identification. And they're going to stop going to the meetings because they're going to know there's no answer there. And sometimes they're right. If they didn't read How it Works at some meetings you wouldn't even know it was an AA meeting

The whole twelve step or big book renaissance that's going on right now is about getting back to these basics, back to the things that work. Because there's a lot of new things now that don't work, and you look at the rates of recovery in some of

the meetings today, you're going to see that it's a revolving door. There may be a core group of people who are there year after year after year, but the rest of it is a revolving door. This renaissance, getting back to the text of Alcoholics Anonymous, is saying we need to change that, we need to change that or we're irresponsible. We're letting people die. It's almost contributory manslaughter, if we're not stepping up to the plate and putting emphasis on step work.

When we all get to the end of our journey here on this planet, will we have left it a better place, will we have given more than we have taken? Now the alcoholic, building their method of operation from a selfish, self-centered, self-seeking platform is more than likely to get to the end of the lifespan and he has taken more than he has given. We now have wonderful opportunity to set right the scales. We're being offered a chance, offered a blueprint to get busy setting the scale right. So it's an experience no alcoholic should miss.

If we don't feel good about ourselves, we've missed something in the recovery process. Because it's those negative emotions that the whole twelve step process is designed to eliminate or at least marginalize. This is about recovery. This is about being healthy. This is about being reborn. This is about being the spearhead of God's ever advancing creation. The twelve steps is about the joy of living and if there's not joy in your life, you are doing it wrong. There may be circumstances in your life that are really challenging but you can still have a joy about life, no matter how challenging they are.

## Working With Others 2

So often, alcoholism is an illness of isolation. Our world gets smaller and smaller the more we drink. Sometimes there was no social activity, there was nobody left in our life and our world had diminished into this tiny little existence. Part of recovery is getting back out into the world, becoming able to step back out into the world. We believe that the first eleven steps prepare us to be able to do that in many different ways. Certainly the most important is becoming part of the solution to alcoholism, actually having a way out upon which we can all agree, which is the steps, then finding people who need to be exposed to the steps and helping them to actually take the steps. So here we are at step twelve.

The book is very selfless. If you look at the prayers and the directions, many of them are about becoming useful, not getting more and better things for yourself. It's about becoming more effective and more useful to others. The big book doesn't talk much about sponsorship but it's a textbook on how to sponsor. One of the sadder things in the twelve step fellowships today is a lot of people have lost the skill sets that this book helps you develop, and they've come up with easier, softer ways. They've come up with the one-liners, so that they can remain lazy and not have to get involved with the person at a deeper level. You can just tell them to turn it over or to keep it simple, and give them your phone number which you know they're never going to call, and walk out of the meeting feeling good about yourself. But the fact of the matter is this book really is about developing the skill sets you need, not only to experience recovery for yourself, but to be effective and useful at showing other people how to recover. This chapter is very, very clear on this.

*"If you are satisfied he is a real alcoholic begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady."* Again, the first sentence in *We Agnostics...* "we hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic, and here it says, if you are satisfied he is a real alcoholic, so you should understand what an alcoholic is before you start your twelve step work. You should be satisfied that they're a real alcoholic. We are not saying that we shouldn't be of help to other people when and where it's appropriate, but the philosophy in this book is if you're not sure that a person is a real alcoholic, if you've qualified them and they're not, they might be a heavy drinker, they might be a drug addict or whatever, you're really supposed to move on. You're supposed to remain helpful but as far as engaging in the intensive work with the individual of working them through the steps, you're going to find that if they're not alcoholic, chances are nine out of ten that they're not going to get through the work. Now if they are alcoholic, they've recognized the hopelessness of their condition and they're starting to believe that there's a solution, you're going to have somebody you can work with. It's not going to be a waste of time because most likely, they're going to engage in this process and become part of what it says later in this process – the fellowship that you crave.

During the authors heyday, it was the mid 90's and he was on fire with working with people and situated in such a place where there was a lot of parking, it was a big house, he had a very easy job. It wasn't like he was working sixteen hours a day, and he had a lot of time for this. He took at a conservative estimate two hundred people through the steps between '1995 and, 2002 in this house. The people that made it through the steps are all still around. They are working with others. Their qualities of life are really high. And the people that did not, who came over because they were curious or they wanted to learn more, they weren't fully convinced that if they didn't go through the steps, they were going to die. They were just there maybe to become better members of whatever fellowship they were involved with, and they would poop out somewhere in steps four, five, eight, nine or twelve. Those people who didn't go all the way through the steps, every one of them are gone. We are not saying they drank; there just wasn't enough spiritual power in their system to keep them plugged in and connected. So he learned a great deal over the years about this and defaults back to the book. If we come up with something, it may be good, it may be bad, but it's untried. It's untested. The stuff that is in this book was learned from hard experience in the years where they were intensively working with other alcoholics, and it's usually a better bet. If we think they should go left, and this book says they should go right, we've learned to tell them to go right. Now, where we've met with somebody, they're willing at least to listen to us, we've been put in front of them in a number of ways. Maybe we've met them in meeting. Maybe we've met them in a detox. Maybe a family member has recommended us. We need to be open and available to twelve step opportunities where we can. So we're sitting in front

of the person and we tell them a little bit about our story. It says in here to talk about your alcoholism and down at the last paragraph on page ninety-two, *"Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady."*

This is something that Bill learned from Doctor Silkworth. Bill was running around telling everybody all kinds of stuff, and the fact of the matter was he wasn't giving anybody sufficient motivation. If you can convince somebody that alcoholism is a progressively fatal malady, they can't stay away from a drink no matter how much they want to and once they start drinking their body is going to ensure that they kill themselves with the alcohol, and their life is unmanageable on practically every level it could be unmanageable on, if you've been able to convince somebody of that, there's going to be motivation to move forward.

*"Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it."* The body would be the physical craving. Once you start drinking you have little or no control over the amount you take. The condition of mind is that strange mental blank spot that does not enable you to stay consistent with the decision to stay separated from alcohol. So many people misunderstand the first step. They think the first step is "I just don't drink no matter what." And if you walk into a detox or a hospital and you tell somebody, "I just don't drink no matter what", what's going to happen is they're going to look at you and say, "That doesn't work for me. I've been trying that for eight years. What else you got?" If you don't have anything else, they're just going to dismiss you as somebody that can't help them.

It's a real good idea to understand the principles of alcoholism, the description of alcoholism that's proffered earlier in this book. *"Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience."* Nobody has better personal experience with alcoholism than us. If you approach this as a clinician or expert, start pulling out facts and figures, statistical data, you're just going to lose somebody. But if you start telling them about your own personal experience and they believe that you know what you're talking about, they may start to listen. *"Explain that many are doomed who never realized their predicament."* Because alcoholism doesn't allow you the dignity of an accurate self-appraisal, a lot of people die before they even understand what the problem is.

Many of us didn't know what alcoholism was. We knew we drank a lot, but we had never been exposed to a description of alcoholism. Every once in a while somebody handed us a pamphlet with a bunch of questions like, does alcohol affect your personal relationships? Have you gotten in trouble with alcohol? And all those questions could easily refer to a heavy drinker. Is it possible a heavy drinker has had a DUI or gotten in trouble drinking? Is it possible a heavy drinker has gotten fired from a job for being drunk? Is it possible that a heavy drinker was arrested two or three times when they were drinking?

Well, the description in this book is about the alcoholic, not the problem drinker. So many of those little pamphlets that we were handed had to do with drug abuse, or dependence, not alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence. It's really necessary for us as twelve steppers to be able to identify somebody who's just a disco drunk from somebody who's a real alcoholic. Because if we're running around with the disco drunks, alcoholics could be dying and we're not going to get anywhere with the disco drunks anyway.

*"Doctors are rightly loath to tell alcoholic patients the whole story unless it will serve some good purpose."* A lot of times these doctors are afraid to tell you that you're hopeless and you're going to die a horrible alcoholic death and there's nothing they can do for you, so they won't. Current practice in the medical field is heading toward brief interventions, alcoholism awareness, substance abuse awareness, ASAM and a number of other organizations are making inroads in educating doctors about addictive illness and alcoholism, but never ever make the mistake of thinking a doctor understands alcoholism or drug addiction. You are putting your hands in someone that may not understand anything about it. They may think that you're just doing it to yourself and if you just hitch up your bootstraps, you could get on with your life and become responsible.

That may be their perspective on alcoholism or drug addiction, and if you're putting your trust in someone like that, all they're going to have for you is half-measures and ineffective techniques for trying to straighten your life out. *"But you may talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution. You will soon have your friend admitting he has many, if not all, the traits of the alcoholic. If his own doctor is willing to tell him he is alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted his condition, he has become very curious to know how you got well."* Now, back in the day, they had good relationships with some doctors. Today doctors are more often than not going to refer you to treatment. Some of them will say, "Hey, you should go to AA", but most of them are going to give you literature on detox or treatment. Many of us know a lot about treatment. We know that treatment is about discovery and the twelve steps are about recovery.

Without a spiritual approach to a recovery process, something that the treatment centers sometimes aren't real well versed in offering, there's going to be little or no chance for the real alcoholic. The people who get help in the treatment centers are mainly alcohol abusers or drug abusers, not the alcoholics. The alcoholics, when they get discharged, more often than not are going to experience that obsession of the mind, because treatment will not offer you a solution to the obsession. They can tell you about every trigger in the book and put you through every relapse prevention program there is, but if you're a real alcoholic and you're not working a spiritual program of action, the time and the place will come, and none of those solutions will be sufficient defense against the first drink.

Self-knowledge is not a defense against the first drink and knowing your triggers and taking relapse prevention courses are about self-knowledge. So again, treatment is appropriate. It's very profitable for people to do that and you can learn a whole lot of helpful information and life skills. But if you're a real alcoholic and you don't engage in some type of spiritual process, as a way of life, your chances are going to be less than average. So many people who are looking to make money in the treatment field, and there are people who are against the twelve step movement as a whole because they

can't make any money off of it. They can't gain any status in it, they're going to be supportive of other options. But the fact of the matter is if they can accurately distinguish the difference between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic, they're going to recognize that any success that they have with non-spiritual methods are mostly going to be with the non-alcoholic problem drinker. What will happen is they get the real alcoholics in their program and they're going to have the attitude like, "Well, they just didn't want it enough" or "they weren't being honest" or "they didn't do everything I asked them to do and they failed."

Well, the fact of the matter is, it's not always the alcoholic who drinks that fails. More often than not, it's the process somebody was offering them that's the failure. Here is an example, we put somebody into a treatment program several years ago and they drank and were thrown out. Here is what we did, we called up the individual who did the admission and said, "What are you doing?" He goes, "Well, he drank." We asked him, "Okay, well, let me ask you this...I sent a problem drinker whose drinking is out of control to you for treatment and they drank and you threw them out? I don't get that. If I sent somebody to you who had cancer and their cancer came back, would you throw them out of the program because their cancer came back? If you're saying alcoholism is a disease, then how about treating it like one?" This was the treatment process that failed, not the client.

So there's misunderstanding across the board, even in the field of alcoholism treatment. Many of them still think that it hinges on the person's willingness. What they fail to understand is, you can be really willing to not drink and drink. The best way forward for an alcoholic is to have been approached by someone who has solved the problem, who was as alcoholic as you, and place yourself under their care and direction.

The treatment centers that are very serious about pushing spirituality, whether it's in attendance at twelve step groups, meditation and prayer, getting back involved with a faith life, the ones that don't just use the twelve steps as window dressing but actually help you work a real program, those are the ones that are successful. The ones that are just using clinical methods alone, they have maybe a one percent success rate for the alcoholic. Again it's not in most people's best interest to separate the alcoholic from the non-alcoholic, because they're both paying customers.

*"If his own doctor is willing to tell him that he is alcoholic, so much the better. Even though your protégé may not have entirely admitted his condition, he's become very curious to know how you got well."* That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to tell them all about alcoholism, all about your experiences, how you couldn't stop, how you always got in trouble and didn't understand what was going on. By doing this you're going to get them very curious. They're going to want to know, because they're going to identify with you. They're going to say, "Yeah, that's what happens to me." And out of curiosity, they're going to want to know what you did because even if they're not completely willing to give up alcohol entirely right then and right there, they would want to know how to do so if they needed to. *"So let him ask you that question if he will. Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely."* Tell him exactly what happened to you means to talk about your recovery, what steps you took, what happened to you during those steps. *"If the man be atheist or agnostic, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles."* So that's a deal-breaker, if someone is not willing to at least be willing to believe in a power greater than themselves, and to start to live by spiritual principles, there's nothing you can do for them. If they are really an alcoholic, they are not going to recover. They may have periods of sobriety ahead of them. They may even make some progress. But the time and the place is going to come and they're going to start drinking again and that's going to throw them right back into the progressive cycle of alcoholism. Most alcoholics die an alcoholic death, way more than most.

This is a serious illness. This is the number one health threat in America today. We would say one out of ten people suffer from alcoholism and a huge majority of them are about the business of drinking themselves to death. About ten percent of the alcoholics are doing something about it in a serious way. About ninety percent are trying to do the best they can with the alcohol

It says stress the spiritual feature freely, it's important that we talk about our experience with a power greater than ourselves, what God has done for us that we could not do for ourselves. However, there are going to be people who have very antagonistic views of God. There are going to be people who are very mad at God, or they have a damaged conception of God. There are going to be people who have been in abusive religion. One of the fastest growing twelve step groups in America today is Fundamentalists Anonymous.

There are going to be people who misunderstand. So in the beginning what some of us did was place the higher power label on our sponsor and the groups. Moving into these steps and experiencing the power of these steps, we then started to feel a power flow through us and started to believe this help was coming from a power, the power of God. It took some of us a long time to be able to establish the relationship with and the understanding of God that we have today, but we all start where we are and then develop this relationship through the work in the steps.

Whatever concept you have, start there but let's start building on it. Let's start getting rid of the concepts that don't seem to work and let's get you about the business of a spiritual journey where you're asking the right questions and you're paying attention to this question of God. Please be willing to have a beginner's mind and be open to spiritual concepts. But no matter where someone is we don't think that the God idea should stop someone from moving forward. We need to be compassionate and understanding, the people we are working with can have a bizarre, tragic relationship with a power greater than themselves at times. Sometimes they know more about theology than we do. At times we are working with priests or ministers who are alcoholic.

We have to not be authoritative about what kind of a concept of God they should have. So we don't convince them of the

attributes of God. We convince them they're going to die without a relationship with one.

*"When dealing with such a person, you'd better use every day language to describe such principles. There is no use arousing any prejudice that he may have against certain theological terms and conceptions about which he may already be confused. Don't raise such issues, no matter what your own convictions are. Your prospect may belong to a religious denomination. His religious education and training may be far superior to yours. In that case he is going to wonder how you can add anything to what he already knows. But he will be curious to learn why his own convictions have not worked and why yours seemed to work so well. He may be an example of the truth that faith alone is insufficient."*

The book of James was very important to the early alcoholics. They almost named AA the James Club. Doctor Bob would read from the book of James from the podium in the earlier meetings, and in the book of James, that's where the statement is, faith without works is dead. It is true for alcoholics. We can believe in religious concepts like predestination, in concepts like the grace, unearned grace, we can believe in those concepts, but we can't sit home and not getting busy. That type of faith will not keep somebody sober. The type of faith we need is one where we jump back into our fellowship and our community and start working hard at helping other people.

That's what the first century Christians were all about and the Oxford Group based their action program in this. Why Christianity spread so quickly, in three hundred years, it was the main religion in the Roman Empire. And it started out being a peasant cult. A couple of the reasons were Christians believed so much in the power of God that they were not afraid to take care of sick people. They were the ones that would go into the houses during the plagues and the epidemics and minister to people not being afraid that they were going to get sick. Everybody else would abandon these people because they knew it was contagious. The Christians would jump right in there and take care of these people, because faith without works was dead. Now when the people got well, what did they want to do? They wanted to become Christians because these Christians saved their lives.

So that helped the growth. Also, infanticide was big in the Roman Empire. That was where when you had female baby that was almost no use to the people in the Roman Empire, so they would put those babies out in the backyard to expire. They wanted boys. And the Christians believed that that was not right. So all of a sudden you had tons and tons of female Christians, what did that lead to? That led to the growth of Christianity also. Those were just two of the reasons why Christianity spread. And the only reason we bring it up is because that's where the concept that the big book authors got, faith without works is dead.

*"To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish constructive action".* That's a great line to memorize. Somebody comes to a meeting, raises their hand and says, "I drank again." You can ask them the question, "Well, were you self-sacrificing, unselfish and were you engaged in constructive action?" and most of the time it was, "No. I was doing what I wanted to do."

*"Let them see that you are not there to instruct him in religion. Admit that he probably knows more about it than you do but call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink."* It's not about what you know. It's about what you do. And faith without works is dead. The term works has become unpopular in a lot of recovery fellowships.

Some people say, "If I would have heard that I would have to do all the work when I first came in, I would have been out the door." And the question some of us have to ask about that person is "Would anybody have cared? You're assuming we care whether or not you would have been out the door. What are you bringing to the party here Mr. Bleeding Decon?" The fact of the matter is, why avoid the concept of work if that's what they need to do to save their life? Would a doctor say, "Boy, I don't want to bring up the fact that this guy's going to have to go on penicillin. That will hurt his feelings." Would a doctor do that? No. So, again, we're the people who can help these people who are dying, so would you rather step on somebody's feelings or step on their grave?

Sometimes you have to tell them there's a lot of work ahead. If you're not ready for the work, here's my phone number, give me a call if you change your mind. Alcohol is supposed to be the persuader, not us. We're not supposed to talk people into quitting drinking. They have to get to that point themselves.

*"Perhaps your story will help him see where he has failed to practice the very precepts he knows so well. We represent no faith or denomination. We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations."* That is the instruction in how to bring up the God question. There are some good instructions in here.

So there are about ten instructions per page in this chapter, we definitely owe it to our brothers and sisters in alcoholism out there to become proficient with this. Now we're going to move from step three into the program of action. *"Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal."* How you did step four, so if you haven't done step four, how are you going to do this? One of the things that you see are inexperienced members of fellowships doing twelve step calls. They've never done a fourth step. They've never made amends. They don't pray and meditate. And yet they're going on twelve step calls. What kind of a message are they actually bringing to the person?

*"Explain how you straightened out your past",* how you did the ninth step. *"And why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him,"* a little bit about the twelfth step. *"It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this onto him plays a vital part in your own recovery."* Again, nothing will so much ensure immunity from alcohol as intensive work with others. Say that to the person. Because a lot of times alcoholics are like, "What am I going to owe this guy?" or "how much is this going to cost?" Make it very clear that it's not about what they do. You're there to pass on the message. If the person is receptive, you'll do everything you can to help. Other than that, there's no obligation. We're not obligating this individual to anything. *"Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him. Make it plain that he is under no obligation to you, that you hope only that he will try to help other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties."*

*Suggest how important it is that he places the welfare of other people ahead of his own.* That sentence, instead of all the happy little slogans, should be up on every wall at every meeting. It is important that you place the welfare of other people ahead of your own. We would like to see that as one of those wall plaques, because it's true and it's really important but you instead hear, it's a selfish program" what the book says is, you need to place the welfare of other people ahead of your own.

*"Make it clear that he is not under pressure, that he needn't see you again if he doesn't want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off for he has helped you more than you have helped him."* "if your talk has been sane, quiet and full of human understanding, you have perhaps made a friend. Maybe you have disturbed him about the question of alcoholism. This is all to the good. The more hopeless he feels, the better. He will be more likely to follow your suggestion." Its great to paint people into the corner. The obsession of the mind is going to continue to put alcohol into your body. Once it's in your body, the phenomenon of craving is going to ensure you drink yourself to death. And every aspect of your life is in turmoil and completely unmanageable. That's being painted into a corner.

If you disturb the people, they may get upset, especially if you disturb people in some of the recovery meetings. By really talking about what the real problem is and what the real solution is, you're going to disturb alcoholics, no doubt about it. Nobody wants to feel small because they've never done this and you're talking about that really being a good member of that particular fellowship is all about doing it. That's going to raise their ego to defend itself. "Kid, you don't know nothing." But if you disturb them about their alcoholism, it might lead to their recovery. We are not saying that we need to go out and make enemies and cause contention everywhere we go. There's a way to do it with love, kindness, tolerance and intelligence, but sometimes we need to disturb alcoholics.

This book is not just about the answers. It's about the questions and it's asking you to consider those questions. Don't answer them right away. In other words, if you go into this book already with your answer, you're not going to learn anything. If you're looking in this book for an answer, you will instead find it's a process. It's not an answer. But there are a number of questions that you need to consider. Now, think about a question. Let's say I ask you a question and you answer it. The types of questions they're asking us in here require consideration. We need to look back through our own experience the experience of others and very thoughtfully answer these questions based on our own experience. That's how you remain open and willing to learn and experience.

*"The more hopeless he feels, the better."* "Your candidate may give reasons why he need not follow all of the program." Pay the money back? Admit all my defects of character to you? *"He may rebel at the thought of a drastic house-cleaning which requires discussion with other people."* The fourth and the fifth step. *"Do not contradict such views. Tell him you once felt as he does, but you doubt you would have made much progress had you not taken action."*

We share our experience, our strength and our hope, but what this sentence is basically saying is if you're working with somebody who's balking on the fourth and the fifth step, if they're balking on the eighth and the ninth step, this basically tells you that you need to tell them that you would not have made much progress had you not taken action. So in other words, if somebody is not willing to do the steps with you, they are not willing to work with you. Do not become a drama coach. Do not become someone that gets called fifteen times a day when they're in a jackpot. That doesn't help anybody. We're not about encouraging people to stay sober. We're about offering people a recovery process where they can be free. If you're the type of advisor or sponsor who just says, "Call me every day and tell me what's going on", who cares what's going on? Don't you have your own life to live? Now, if you take the time to take them through the steps, now you're not going to be a drama coach any more. The questions they're going to have for you will be all about, I'm helping this guy and I'm wondering what to do.

You're going to stop getting all those phone calls about," I feel horrible today, and I wanted to kill myself and my wife is yelling at me and my boss is." We don't have time for phone calls like that, so this book is all about offering somebody a solution, not keeping them perpetually in a state of unmanageability and then to discuss their unmanageability when they call every day.

*"On your first visit, tell him about the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If he shows any interest, lend him your copy of this book."* So, what are you supposed to have with you on a twelve step call? A big book, a spare, you don't want to give them the one that you've been marking up for fourteen years, your prized book, you got to have a spare.

*"Unless your friend wants to talk further about himself, do not wear out your welcome. Give him a chance to think it over. If you do stay, let him steer the conversation in any direction he likes. Sometimes a new man is anxious to proceed at once."* "Okay, let's do all the steps right here, right now, I got fifteen minutes". *"And you may be tempted to let him do so. This is sometimes a mistake. If he has trouble later, he is likely to say that you rushed him. You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion or crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop. Simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection."* And you do that by telling him how you went through the steps. *"Show him how they worked with you."* You should talk about some of the promises that have come true as a result of the steps.

*"Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him if he wants to get well, you will do anything to help. If he is not interested in your solution, if he does not want to go through the steps with you, if he expects you to act only as a banker for his financial difficulties or a nurse for his sprees"* or a drama coach, *"you may have to drop him until he changes his mind. This he may do after he gets hurt some more."* So, what are you supposed to do if on the first visit if the person does not become convinced to start working the steps with you? You don't take them on. It's unfortunate that this goes against current conventional wisdom today.

But we can't tell you how many people have asked us to sponsor them over the years that were less than serious. Their

motives for asking us sponsor them was not a request to help them with the steps. It's incumbent upon the twelve-stepper to get good at painting the picture of what alcoholism looks like and what recovery looks like. When you ask somebody, are you willing to go to any lengths, make sure that you have given them the dignity to understand what any lengths are. Make sure that you've given them the dignity of a thorough understanding of what any lengths looks like. One of the things that we do a lot of times is I have them sign our big book when we start to work with them. I am willing to go to every single length in this book, then they sign and date it. If at some point in time in the future, they're balking or they're avoiding us, we'll bring it to their attention that they made a deal with us. We've got it in writing. You said you were willing to go to any lengths. What's going on with you? Why in the world is a Mets game more important than coming over and meeting with us for step work? What part of that sense of urgency that's so important to recovery have you lost? We will do things like that. We have learned these tricks, because the alcoholic ego doesn't want them to recover. The alcoholic spirit does, so you need to get the people in touch with their spirit side as much as possible. Any trick in the book that you can come up with to keep people involved in this, we think is fair game.

*"If he is sincerely interested and wants to see you again, ask him to read this book in the interval. After doing that, he must decide for himself whether he wants to go on."* You ask them after they've read the book, are you willing to go to any lengths, they know what any lengths looks like. If they don't want to do it, here's what you do...*"He should not be pushed or prodded by you, his wife or friends. If he is to find God, the desire must come from within. If he thinks he can do the job in some other way or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience."* Remember, alcohol is a great persuader. You don't want to blow your relationship with the individual just because they're not willing to go through the steps right at this point. You leave your phone number and you say, "Look, this is the only way I know. I would be doing you and me a disservice to move forward with you if you're not willing to do it this way. If you want to do it another way, that's great. But if it doesn't work for you, please remember me and come back to me, and give me a call. If you drink again or if your life stays unmanageable, would you please think about me and keep this phone number?" We sometimes do something like that.

*"We have no monopoly on God. We merely have an approach that worked with us. But point out that we alcoholics have much in common and you would like in any case to be friendly. Let it go at that. Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try it again."* We have seen people spend so much time on one sponsee who are unwilling to go through the steps, going to court with them, lent them money, had them stay at their house....that's all ego. That kind of approach is all about ego and all about wanting people to like you. That's not an effective way to really help somebody. *"You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer."* And if you're not finding people desperate enough to accept the twelve steps, you're not going to the right places. You're not in the detoxes. You're not in the mental hospitals. You're not in the asylums. *"We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you."* So right there...are we supposed to chase people around? No.

*"If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself"* That's because he's going to continue to relapse. *"To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy. One of our fellowship failed entirely with his first half dozen prospects. He often says that if he had continued to work on them, he might have deprived many others who have since recovered of their chance."* Remember, we're not on a membership drive here. We don't get a toaster for everybody we sign up at the home group. We're about looking for the people who can and will work with us. That's what this is about.

### Working With Others 3

We really like the way this book describes the people that we're working with. There's so many slang terms out there today that we kind of disagree with, pigeons, babies, pukes...you'll hear all kinds of ways to describe these newer individuals that you're working with. We however are of the school that we believe most of us were humiliated and shamed enough out there with alcohol. We don't need to find that in recovery. So the terminology they use is prospect for someone you're trying to engage in the recovery process. Once they've agreed to start working with you, then they're a protégé. And once they're finished with the steps, they're a friend. And that's the way this book describes the individuals that you're working with. And we really like to use that. conventional wisdom being what it is, when you use those terms in some of the recovery groups out there, people won't know what the heck you're talking about and that's kind of a shame. But that's how they describe them in the book.

So we've met with them the first time. We've left them the book Alcoholics Anonymous. We've asked them to read it. We've told them a little bit about our story about what it was like, what happened, what it's like now, and we've engaged them enough that they've talked with us about their experience and they're interested. Now we're going to move onto the second visit.

*"Suppose now you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared to go through with the twelve steps of the program of recovery."* Those are some powerful sentences right there. Traditionally today what they want to do is they want to get you to a meeting so you can start hearing people share. We don't think that is as good an approach as the one they describe in this book because if an individual has read the book Alcoholics Anonymous and you ask them, "Are you willing to go to any lengths?" they're going to understand what that is. Then you get a commitment from them to go through the twelve steps. If they have some reservations about some of the steps, we

don't necessarily see that that's a deal-breaker. A lot of times you don't have the power to do the ninth step when you're brand new and have just read this book. The power for each step comes from taking the action of the preceding step, but you can ask them, "Would you be willing to do this if you could?" and you at least need to get that type of affirmation from them to move on.

*"Having had the experience yourself of going through the twelve steps, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision."* That's a third step decision. *"And tell his story."* That's the fifth step. *"But do not insist upon it if he prefers to consult with someone else."* So does it say drag them to a meeting? No, it does not. In these early days they didn't want a bunch of half measure people in the meeting. If someone wasn't willing to go through the twelve steps, they really didn't want them in their fellowship. The fellowship was about people who were well along in the steps, fellowshiping with each other to keep on this path, talking about where they can find more prospects, where they can find suffering alcoholics to offer this solution to. If someone asks to work with us, we don't just say yes. We have some requirements and need to find out all we can about them. We need to sit down and talk. We need to qualify them as far as them giving us some of their drinking experience, what happens to them when they drink, what happens to them when they're sober.

We need to know that and allow them the dignity of seeing what the process is for recovery which is laid out in this book. So we will leave a book with them, give them some assignments, they need to read a certain amount of chapters, then call us back and start to move through. But before we start taking somebody through the steps, we want them to know what they look like, because we really don't have time for the pooper-outers. It says our time as recovered alcoholics is valuable and we don't want to waste it with people who are not committed to the program of recovery.

There's the fellowship and there's the program. And the fellowship, at best, can generate a period of time where one can stay sober, yet untreated. This recovery program can offer freedom from addiction, freedom from alcoholism, as a way of life. That's a much more important thing to offer somebody than to just offer them mere encouragement not to drink and to show up at some meetings where people are updating you on their drama du jour. We want to work with the people who are going to respond. Even in clinical trials in the medical industry, they will weed out the people who are bad bets for that clinical trial. They'll qualify them out of that trial because of one reason or another. So we do the same type of thing with this.

When we qualify someone out who is not willing to work with us, we remain friendly with them but we let them know that if you change your mind and you want to go through with this, we will do anything we can to help. But it's not in my best interests or yours to play phone games with you every night at seven o'clock, having you let me know what new disaster you've gotten into because you're an untreated alcoholic.

So many people are allowed to languish in the fellowship, not being held accountable to a recovery process that will offer them freedom, a huge quality of life, and permanent sobriety. That's an unbelievable shame.

In the 1976 third edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, on the dust jacket it said the message of *Alcoholics Anonymous* is the book, the textbook of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the message of AA is in the steps. Now you let people get their hands in things and they'll mess it up, so when the fourth edition came out, if you look at the 2000 edition of the fourth edition dust jacket, it says that the book and steps was the message of AA, so what they had done was they made it into a historical statement. The steps and the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was, the message for those poor alcoholics back in the day. There's a lot of members that were saying, "You need to change that", they did change that. A lot of people have been pushing New York for an answer to "if we're supposed to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, what then is that message?" And unfortunately what you get from New York today is the message is anything your group wants it to be.

So they so don't want to engage in controversy, they so don't want to hurt people's feelings, they're making the message of *Alcoholics Anonymous* anything your inexperienced discussion meeting wants it to be. And many of us think that's being way too politically correct. We think that there are going to be people whose recovery, whose quality of life and whose life itself is going to be affected by opening the doors that wide. We have to ask ourselves what the motivation would be for doing such a thing.

Many of us have frequented recovery groups where, we wouldn't want them defining a message for us. Clem Kadiddlehopper in the back, who's got the loudest voice, is kind of holding court and seen as a group leader and his recovery is very questionable, we're sorry; we need something a little more definitive than that.

The next paragraph is about some of the ways you're going to need to step up. If you find someone who is willing to work with you, these are the ways that you need to step up. *"He may be broke or homeless. If he is, you might try to help him about getting a job or give him a little financial assistance."* But you should not deprive your family or creditors of money they should have. *"Perhaps you will want to take the man into your home for a few days, but be sure to use your discretion. Be certain he will be welcomed by your family and he is not trying to impose upon you for money, connections or shelter."*

We have taken people into our house. There have been cases where there just wasn't a detox method available or there's been somebody from another country who's coming over basically to go through the steps with us. We never had any problems with that. As a matter of fact, these are people who are some of our closest friends today. You need to really be sure of someone's sincerity, someone's willingness. Is the willingness born of desperation or are they just trying to get out of the jackpot? A lot of those things need to be qualified before you open the door and move the kids out of the bedroom. But there are many times when this is the right thing to do.

*"But if you permit someone to impose upon you, you only do him harm."* *"You will be making it possible for him to be*

*insincere. You will be aiding in his destruction rather than his recovery.*" Another thing you hear bandied about in meetings today is, "You know, if somebody's willing, there's nothing you can do wrong and if somebody isn't willing, there's nothing you can do right." We take exception to that. We believe that if we make bad moves as sponsors, spiritual advisors or as twelve steppers, we can aid someone in their destruction. We can actually help them kill themselves if we don't act appropriately.

When we use this chapter as a default for working with others, we rarely make mistakes. It doesn't mean that everybody gets through the steps and everybody recovers, but our success rate is much higher with this type of compliance. The success rate in some of the twelve step fellowships today is pretty poor. If you see how many people pick up a desire chip and how many people pick up a ten year chip, you will see that there's a huge difference in how many ten year chips get handed out at your group then how many twenty-four hour chips. But at least seventy-five percent of the people that engaged in this process are still sober, so we know that this works.

Whatever is going on in the fellowships doesn't, because of the amount of desire chips and the amount of ten-year coins that gets given out. Just have your group secretary keep track of that in your meeting if you want to do an analysis of the retention rate for any particular group, but about seventy-five percent of the people that have gone through this work are still active and still working with other people from our personal experience. The recovery rate hasn't changed. We talked about this in the foreword to the second edition...seventy-five percent of the people recover, fifty percent right away, another twenty-five percent after some relapse...that's what we still see. We have seen that in our own experience so if there are groups that don't have that, if there are people that don't have that, they lose all their sponsees, it would be a good idea to pay attention to what this says, because people's lives depend on it.

*"Never avoid these responsibilities but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery.* We believe that the grace of God keeps us sober. We believe that people, as they're engaging in this process, as they're moving through the steps, are under the grace of God. Now the grace of God keeps us sober, however, the whole point of going through the steps is to have conscious contact with the God who is already keeping us sober. The difference between the grace of God, which will last only as long as ignorance or failure to act, and having conscious contact with that God, is like the difference between night and day. What we're about when we're moving somebody through this work is to get them in touch with the power that is keeping them sober and can help recreate their life. To get rid of the blocks that can prevent acceptance of that grace of God.

The mercy of God is always available. What happens is we block ourselves off from that grace and that mercy through the actions of self. What this process does is it removes the things that block us from a conscious contact with that which can keep us sober and help us recreate our lives.

*"We are to never avoid these responsibilities but be sure you are doing the right thing if you assume them. Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery".* That's another construction reference, you have the keystone, you have the foundation stone, you have the arch, you have the mortar, all of these are important ingredients in building a path to freedom. If you forget some of the building blocks, you're not going to have an arch through which you will walk to freedom. What's going to happen is you will have periods of sobriety interrupted by relapses, if you're a real alcoholic. The problem with that is relapses can sometimes kill us and so a permanent sobriety is what we need to be looking for. The people who say, "I stay sober one day at a time", they're not understanding these principles. Bill and Bob wouldn't have worked with somebody if they didn't say, "I'm done for good and for all. I'm willing to be done for good and for all." We're supposed to live life one day at a time. We're not supposed to not drink one day at a time.

That doesn't mean that we can't relapse. If you drop your guard, if you rest on your laurels, alcohol is a cunning and baffling enemy. There's misunderstanding within the conventional knowledge within the twelve step fellowships today. The person who says, "Well, you know, when I came in they told me I didn't need to quit drinking forever. All I needed to do was quit drinking for a day at a time and if they would have told me I would have had to quit drinking forever, I never would have come in." Somebody that would say that is not someone they would have even allowed in the meetings in the early days.

They had no desire to allow somebody like that to come in and sabotage the direction the fellowship was aiming at. That person would have been qualified right out. If you're not willing Doctor Bob would say, "Kid, are you done? Are you ready to quit drinking for good?" That's a question he would ask and if you didn't give him the right answer, you were right out his front door. We've opened the doors so wide because we so don't want to hurt anybody's feelings and we so don't want to exclude anybody that practically every twelve step fellowship out there is watered down with individuals who are reluctant to participate in the recovery process. That really hurts the people who are in real trouble. Because the people who are in real trouble come in and they see these people doing half measures, they're still robbing; pillaging and they're just staying sober when they're doing it. They see that and they think they can do that, yet they've gone down the scale too far to get away with that behavior, so they relapse. They figure that that twelve step fellowship doesn't work and they go off and they die. And that's really a tragic thing, unfortunately, but it's happening everywhere.

*"A kindly act once in awhile isn't enough. You have to act the good Samaritan every day if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business."* "It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts hospitals, sanitariums, jails, and asylums." The asylums have been replaced with treatment centers.

*"Your telephone may jangle at any time, day or night. Your wife may sometimes say she is neglected. A drunk may smash the furniture in your home or burn a mattress. You may have to fight with him if he is violent."* "Sometimes you will have to call a doctor and administer sedatives under his direction

What many of us will do is keep airline bottles of vodka or whiskey available for twelve step calls. We have found that they're perfect and keep them right next to the garbage bag. If we go over to somebody's house and they need to be detoxed, sometimes you need to keep them from going into convulsions or violent withdrawal, and you may have to feed them a little alcohol while on the way to the detox process. The garbage bags are so that they don't cover the back of the car with vomit. We have a big book, the airline bottles and a garbage bag.

*"Another time you may have to send for the police or an ambulance. Occasionally you will have to meet such condition. We seldom allow an alcoholic to live in our homes for long at a time. It is not good for him and it sometimes creates serious complications in the family. Though an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect his family."* We make sure that the family has our phone number also, because what happens a lot of times on a twelve step call is a person is not willing at that point in time to get involved in this process. They see it as an overreaction to a problem that they really have under control if they really want to have it under control. That's the misconception that most alcoholics suffer from. So we make sure everybody's got our phone number, wait until the end of the next bender or, wait until he's desperate. Sometimes you're working with a multiple relapse, they may need a couple of weeks some place and then it's going to be our responsibility to be about the business of taking them through the steps. This time they will be expected to do the step work they were unwilling to do before. If a family has your phone number then the next time they're in the hospital or the next time they've gotten a DUI or the next time they're begging for help, they'll know how to get a hold of you.

*"You should continue to be friendly to them. The family should be offered your way of life."* Now how do we do that today? They used to bring them into the meetings with the alcoholics. How do we do that today? We refer them to Al-Anon, Alateen, and Families Anonymous; there are a lot of good programs out there.

*"Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover."* If the family gets involved in AL Anon or one of these other support programs, it's going to make the chances of the alcoholic getting involved in the recovery program that much greater. So that should be explained to the family. A lot of times the family will say, "Well, he's the one that's sick. Why do I have to do any of this stuff?" But it has been proved that family attendance at these meetings will improve the individual's chances of recovering. How willing are you to help your alcoholic relative here? *"Even though he continues to drink, the family will find life more bearable."* We have met some people in the family fellowships, who are living with an active alcoholic and still having a happy and contented life. They've learned how not to allow the alcoholic's collateral damage to affect their quality of life and serenity, that's an amazing thing to see.

There has been a time where we took on too many people to work with and it negatively affected our own life. But what we were usually doing was we were not qualifying them like this book says. What we were doing was saying yes to everybody that asked us for help, and then they were unwilling to do the things we were asking them to do. That is a really bad way to work with other people, trying to cajole them and manipulate them into doing the things they needed to do. You learn from experience to filter out the people who just want to get out of trouble and not participate in a recovery program. We need to get them through the steps and then they're low-maintenance.

So we are not sure that there should be a specific number of people to work with. You should take direction from your sponsor or spiritual advisor and let them be in charge of when too many is too many. Some of us have a meeting in our house, going through the book with a number of people who are in recovery. When you do that, all of a sudden a fellowship grows up among you. A lot of people start asking you to take them through the work. If you have the time to do that, an incredible fellowship grows up around you. If you've taken a lot of people through the work, you don't need to be the go-to guy any more. There's now a team and if somebody comes to you, you can pass them off to the most appropriate individual that you know who has already gone through this work.

We think sponsors who have two thousand sponsees and each one of them calls him every day as a directive, that's a little bit ridiculous. The sponsors who demand that you only do fellowship related activity but don't take you through the steps, we think that's really bad. However, if you are following the dictates in this book, you'll end up doing a really good job and you'll get good results. But there are egos out there, there are people who crave power, prestige, there are people who want to hold you hostage to their particular home group and berate you if you miss a coffee commitment. There's a lot of that going on out there. This book doesn't talk about that. It talks about offering them a program of recovery so that they can become free and survive, not become dependent on one more thing.

People can become dependent on their sponsors because their sponsors are so demanding that if they miss ninety and ninety, that's it. They know they are going to be crucified, so they do everything they can to do exactly what their sponsor says. Their sponsor is on them constantly with directions and they end up being dependent on their sponsor completely and not on a higher power.

That doesn't mean that you don't need to accept guidance to place yourself under the spiritual protection of a sponsor or an advisor. You certainly do need someone who's experienced, but again, the people who are doing some of that stuff, that's a cult mentality. Some power drivers want to have a hierarchy; this book doesn't talk about a hierarchy. It talks about protégé, it talks about a prospect and it talks about a friend. It doesn't take about a hierarchical fellowship structure where the guy with the most time is the leader. They're not interested in that in this book. They're interested in God being your leader, so again, there are good things out there and there are bad things out there. Some people are born to follow. Some people really like to lead but this process is more about finding freedom.

Finding recovery and finding freedom and then going about the business of living life the way God would want you to live it, not the way some bleeding deacon who just happens to be the leader of some home group wants you to live.

*"For the type of alcoholic who is able and willing to get well, little charity in the ordinary sense of the word is needed or wanted. The men who cry for money and shelter before conquering alcohol are on the wrong track. Yet we do go to great extremes to provide each other with these very things when such action is warranted. This may seem inconsistent but we think it is not. It is not the matter of giving that is in question, but when and how to give. That often makes the difference between failure and success."* And failure and success mean life and death to the people we are working with. *"The minute we put our work on a service plane, the alcoholic commences to rely upon our assistance rather than upon God."* That is, that's game, set and match right there for the type of sponsors who want you to obey their every whim. Who want only home group loyalty and sponsorship authority. *"He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this very hard truth. Job or no job, wife or no wife, we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence upon God."*

Now by the time we get through the steps, hopefully we're able to glean a little bit about what God would have us be and what God would have us do. Hopefully the step process isn't going to take years for some of these people, they'll get to the point where they'll have that sense of spirit, that sense of intuition, and they'll be able to rely upon an understanding right and wrong, good and bad. They'll work with God to head in that direction. Until that time, it's not a bad thing to place yourself under the care and protection of a sponsor or a spiritual advisor, but it was only supposed to be for a short period of time when this book was written. If it goes on and on, year after year, you've done something wrong.

After we take someone through the steps, we don't own them. We don't tell them what to do or boss them around. We can suggest a service commitment or suggest they should go there or come here with me, but we should never ask somebody to do something that isn't two things, number one – good for them, and number two – good for others. They're already living under the reliance upon God. We don't know everything they should be doing in their life. We can't decide whether they should go left or right or quit a job or leave a marriage. That's playing God and we were asked not to do that as part of our third step decision. That doesn't mean I won't give them suggestions, but I have to let go of the outcome of that. So we can't become hurt or resentful that they're not doing everything that we tell them to do. We are not God.

*"Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house."*

It's been our experience that the only people that will disagree with this position are people who are still untreated alcoholics or drug addicts who haven't been through these steps.

*"Now the domestic problem...there may be divorce, separation or just strange relations. When your prospect has made such reparations as he can to his family..."* the ninth step...*"and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which he is living..."* explaining the twelve steps to them...*"He should proceed to put those principles into action at home."* That is, if he is lucky enough to have a home. *"Though his family may be at fault in many respects, he should not be concerned about that."* Now, this is revolutionary. How about not complaining about anything in your family? You're in the process of recovery from alcoholism. You're working the twelve steps. How about shutting up about everything? How about keeping your opinion to yourself? How about not criticizing anybody about anything? We are the most critical people in the world. We were born with a critical gene. Here we are, we're on skid row with five cents in our pocket and we know what the political parties should be doing.

*"He should concentrate on his own spiritual demonstration. Argument and fault-finding are to be avoided like the plague. In many homes, this is a difficult thing to do but it must be done if any results are to be expected."* How about if this sentence is true? If you want any results at all from this twelve step process, you are going to have to stop finding fault and arguing with people.

*"If persistent at it for a few months, the effect on a man's family is sure to be great."* If all of a sudden you stop fighting them, criticizing them and arguing with them, there's going to be big changes in the family. *"The most incompatible people discover they have a basis upon which they can meet. Little by little, the family may see their own defects and admit them. These can be discussed in an atmosphere of helpfulness and friendliness."* If you want to keep the family sick, just keep fighting them all the time, keep telling them what they need to do. Rather than allowing them to witness your own personal recovery you continue to tell them what they should do. That's how you keep a family sick.

*"After they have seen tangible results, the family perhaps will want to go along."* Meaning the family may want to go through the steps. *"These things will come to pass naturally and in good time, provided, however, the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that he can be sober, considerate and helpful, regardless of what anyone says or does."* That is setting the bar pretty high for some of us.

*"Of course we will all fall below this standard many times, but we must try to repair the damage immediately, lest we pay the penalty by a spree."* So if you fall short, you argue, you criticize and you try to manipulate, what you should do is at the absolute first moment you can recognize that you're doing this, you need to make amends for it. And pretty soon, you're going to get tired of making amends for doing the same thing over and over again and you're going to grow past it. After you've made the tenth amend for starting an argument, you're just going to be so sick of making amends, you're just not going to start another argument.

*"If there be divorce or separation there should be no undue haste for the couple to get together. The man should be sure of his recovery. The wife should fully understand his new way of life. If their old relationship is to be resumed, it must be on a better basis since the former did not work. This means a new attitude and spirit all around. Sometimes it is in the best interests of all concerned that a couple remain apart. Obviously no rule can be laid down. Let the alcoholic continue his program day by day. When the time for living together has come, it will be apparent to both parties. Let no alcoholic*

say he cannot recover unless he has his family back. This just isn't so. In some cases the wife will never come back." "Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people." Here he says it again. "It is dependent upon his relationship with God. We have seen men get well whose families have not returned at all and we've seen men slip when the families came back too soon." "Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress." We're supposed to walk with them. If we're going to be guiding them, it's very difficult for us to be telling them to do something we're not doing ourselves or we haven't done ourselves. The alcoholic can spot hypocrisy three blocks down the road. It's always a good idea to be able to back up any directions you may be giving with examples in the book. "If you persist," that means if you persist in walking the path of spiritual progress, "remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned." This is probably one of our favorite promises in the book. This is a twelfth step promise. "We realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned." Now how amazing is that? Let's say you sit down with a prospect before you start going through the steps with them, and you say, "Okay, plan out the absolute perfect ideal life", give them a pen and paper and let them go to it. This promise is saying that after they get through the steps, by placing themselves in God's hands, they are going to experience things that are better than anything they could have put down on that piece of paper. It's an amazing promise. "Follow the dictates of a higher power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances." So, do we continue to follow the dictates of your sponsor? No. Follow the dictate of your higher power. "Working with a man and his family you should take care not to participate in their quarrels. You may spoil a chance of being helpful if you do. But urge upon the man's family that he has been a very sick person and should be treated accordingly. You should warn against arousing them and their jealousy. You should point out that his defects of character are not going to disappear overnight. Show them that he has entered upon a period of growth. Ask them to remember when they are impatient the blessed fact of his sobriety. If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomers family how that was accomplished. In this way, you can set them on the right track without becoming critical of them. The story of how you and your wife settled your differences is worth any amount of criticism." It's very important we show the family how to become conducive to the alcoholics recovery. Today the people that work with us have the opportunity of being exposed to a template, a way of life upon which we can all agree, a program of recovery, We see the change coming quickly with these families because they're exposing themselves to the recovery process.

#### Working With Others 4

The chapter "Working with Others" is a really good guide in how to sponsor and how to help other alcoholics. The sad thing is, it seems to be almost ignored in the current twelve step fellowships these days. It goes against current beliefs and current practices. This is an illness, if the American Medical Society says it's a disease, we believe it's a disease, and we believe that there are certain things that have to happen for someone to be able to recover. Recovery comes on the spiritual plane and there are two ways that somebody doesn't get it. One way is if they never hear the message. The other is if they hear the message and choose to ignore it. We feel sorry for the people who never hear the message, because they're never given a chance. The people who hear the message are at least given an option..."Hey, participate in your recovery in this way and rarely have we seen a person fail."

But to be in groups week after month after year where very little of the solution is discussed, it's more about updating everybody on what's going on in your life, the crazy thinking you have and the problems you have with people, that's a far cry from offering somebody a solution and a message of depth and weight. There are some people who bring this concept up in certain support groups. When they do, many times they are considered heretical, there's a heretic among us. But to some of us, the people that were the most significant people for the changes in our life that we needed to be able to recover were people who stepped out and weren't afraid to hurt our feelings with the truth.

We think you get the power to stay in the fellowship by working a really strong program. The book says lack of power is our dilemma. How do we get that power? How do we find that power? We find that power through doing these spiritual exercises in this book. Once you have that power, now you have a way to manage your life. You've got the power of God working through you and now, if you want to stay, you will. If you don't go through this work and all you do is sit around in meetings and participate in gab sessions and drink the coffee, we don't think there's going to be enough power to keep you in decade after decade

If you're a real alcoholic like this book talks about, if you don't go through these steps, there's little chance that you're going to stay sober very long at all. It won't matter how many meetings you're going to, how much coffee you're making, how many rehabs commitments you're doing, if you're not doing the spiritual work that's going to transform you to the point where you are not blocked from God, the obsession can return and you can drink.

By completely inundating yourself with service and meetings, you can create a period of sobriety, you might even believe that that's recovery, but that only lasts as long as the participation. The participation only lasts as long as the enthusiasm for it. The enthusiasm for it only lasts as long as you can stand hearing the same people saying the same stuff year after year, decade after decade. So there's got to be a bigger power at work or else you're just going to become a statistic,

especially if you're in real trouble with alcohol.

The book is going to start talking about how you can interact with your protégé about domestic problems. A lot of the people, when they get sober, they are in turmoil with their family. Their relationships have dissolved. Everybody's mad. There's dysfunction and codependency all over the place and it's a real mess. And all of a sudden, you come in and you're sitting over at the guy's house, you're taking him through the steps, but there's also a bit of mentoring that you need to do. It explains a lot of the ways that we do that in this book. This is one of the ways that they're describing about interacting with your protégé's family. *"If you have been successful in solving your own domestic problems, tell the newcomer's family how that was accomplished. In this way, you can set them on the right track without being critical of them. The story of how you and your wife settled your differences is worth any amount of criticism."* This has a great principle in it, the principle is don't tell the person what to do in a situation that you may not have all the facts about. You haven't lived in that house the last twenty years, he has. Tell him what you did and what worked for you. That's much safer than judging the situation with half of the facts and saying, "You should go left and you should go right." It's much better to say, "Listen, when I went left, this happened, and when I went right, this happened."

There are times that we need to do that as advisors or sponsors also. Here are some of the twelve step promises and here is a bit of a dialogue about the freedom that we can expect. Sometimes we hear someone in a meeting, they're several years sober and they'll share something like, "You know, there's a wedding coming up" or "there's the annual Christmas party at my work and I'm just not going to go because there's booze there and I just don't feel comfortable about booze."

*"Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said that we must not go where liquor is served. We must not have it in our homes. We must shun friends who drink. We must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes. We must not go into bars. Our friends must hide the bottles if we are to go to their house. We mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them still has an alcoholic mind. There is something the matter with his spiritual status."* If somebody comes walking into your support group and says, "You know, I was at a bar mitzvah the other day and when they broke out the wine, I had a nervous breakdown and I had to get out of there." What this book is saying is if you can't handle situations like that, there's step work you need to do. You don't double down on your meetings. What you do is you find out which part of this step process have you skipped, ignored or half measured. Because if you can't be around liquor without having negative reactions up to and including relapse, there is something wrong with your spiritual status. You haven't done what this book asks you to do. You haven't gotten the results that they promise you if you go through this work. Remember, in step ten it says the problem is removed. We're safe and protected. If we're confronted with alcohol, we'll react as if it's a hot flame. We're just not going to go near it. We're going to think sanely and normally about it.

If that's not happening in your life, you're not at step ten. You've got work to do so don't double down on your meetings. Find somebody to take you through the steps. Most of us don't go to drinking parties any more. It's not because we're afraid of drinking at them. We are afraid we are going to get stuck with some guy that's going to tell us the same story four times in a row. It can be very boring to be around drunken people.

If someone has fear about social situation where drinking is part of the event they should be at and we are given spiritual consent by the individual as his advisor or sponsor we may want to ask them, "Have you completed your amends. How are you doing with your eleventh step at night? Are you doing it upon awakening? Are you doing the evening review? How many alcoholics are you working with?" The questions that you ask to see if someone is continuing to work a program in their life. If this is an individual with a strong program, I'm going to worry a lot less about what he does and where he goes. Now if it's somebody who really hasn't made it to the fourth step yet, we may say, "Look, you're out of your mind. , Jonah did not go back into the whale because he left his hat there." We will be comfortable with them going to the pool hall to shoot pool because they are a good pool player when they get through the steps and when they have been working a decent program. It says in here that we need to look at our spiritual status. We need to look at where our spiritual condition is at. If we don't have a good spiritual condition, then we're tempting fate, we don't have a clear understanding of the first step.

If we haven't gone through the steps and we're going back into the beer hall, we don't understand the first step. We have to look at our motives and we have to look at the fitness of our spiritual condition before we can do these things

*"His only chance of sobriety would be some place like the Greenland ice cap and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything. Ask any woman who has sent her husband to distant places on the theory that he would escape the alcohol problem."* If limiting access to alcohol was our defense, we'd all be drunk because, there's bound to be a really cool pub right around the corner. So if access to alcohol is your protection or even your defense, you are in real trouble. You need to get that defense and that power from going through these steps. It's a matter of spiritual condition.

*"In our belief, any scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself, he may succeed for a time but he usually winds up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed."* So here's a rule. *"So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking if we have a legitimate reason for being there."* Notice that that's in hyphenated font in the text. That's very important. Do not just read the first part of this sentence.

Always understand that the most important part of that sentence is "if we have a legitimate reason for being there". We don't think a legitimate reason for being at the pool hall is to hang out with all your old buddies and try to enjoy the party

vicariously. *“That includes bars, nightclubs, dances, receptions, weddings, even plain ordinary whoopee parties.”* Even drinking party’s because, let’s say you’re at work and you land a really big contract and everybody wants to celebrate because that’s going to really make the business and everybody wants to celebrate. There is a reason to be there. The same could be said for a bachelor party. We don’t think that they mean the local drinking parties like the frat drinking parties where the only purpose is to get drunk, we are not to continue to keep going to them.

But there are times in our life for celebration and to cut ourselves off from those times of celebration is not what the book or the program are about. We’re about getting back out there in the world. But we’re to do it in a rational way.

*“To a person who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting providence but it isn’t. You will not that we made an important qualification. Therefore ask yourself...”* Here’s an instruction. *“Ask yourself on each occasion, have I any good social, business or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?”*

Vicarious pleasure is one thing. A good legitimate reason is another. Now when we’re restored to sanity and we understand right from wrong, good from bad, we’re going to be able to make the right decision. If you haven’t gotten to the tenth step, if you have not been restored to sanity, you’re not going to be safe. It’s very easy to be able to gauge someone’s spiritual condition on their progress through the steps, their motivation, their reason for going, and are they really being honest? Do you really need to be there? Is it really a good idea for you to be there?

*“If you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, whichever seems best, but be sure you are on solid spiritual ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good.”*

Remember, if there’s something important to say, Bill says it three times. *“Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it.”* Now that’s a great principle to use on your meeting attendance. *“Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it.”* We think recovery begins when someone is no longer going to the meetings to fill up like it’s a spiritual gas station. They start going to meetings because they know there are people there they can help.

Many times we come across group members who don’t understand this; they have ten or twenty years and think that you’re a crackpot fanatic to be OK with someone going near alcohol. They have no reference point because they’re living in untreated alcoholism themselves and they don’t even know it. They think sobriety is the whole point. That happens everywhere. Let’s say somebody’s been slipping in and out for years and you take them through the steps and they go back to the meetings and they’re really pissed off that no one was talking about a solution. And they start to resent themselves out of the meetings. That’s when you have to sit them down and you have to tell them, *“Look, you need to mature past this fanatical fervor and you need to start thinking about what you can bring to the meeting instead of what you’re expecting to get out of it.”* That’s a maturing thing that hopefully most people go through.

*“But if you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead.”* So if a situation is really making you shaky, does it say go triple on your meetings? No, it says you had better work with another alcoholic. Again, these are principles that people have really forgotten. If all you’re doing is going to meetings and you’re listening to the conventional wisdom in the meetings, that’s not going to be enough for you if you’re in real trouble. You really need to get involved in the recovery program and not expect to recover because you’re attending the fellowship.

*“Why sit with a long face in places where there is drinking, sighing about the good old days? If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there. If a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically. If you are a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means, go on. Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place, explain to all your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of the world. Don’t start to withdraw again just because your friends drink liquor. Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others. So never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful.”* That’s your main job in step twelve.

*“You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.”* That’s a wonderful promise. That we can go to the most sordid spot on earth, into some really rough places to help an alcoholic.

*“Many of us keep liquor in our homes. We often need it to carry green recruits through a severe hangover.”* *“Some of us still serve it to our friends provided they are not alcoholic. But some of us think we should not serve liquor to anyone. We never argue this question. We feel that each family in light of their own circumstances ought to decide for themselves.”* Every once in a while, some of us will pick up some wine or we’ll pick beer or something if we’re having a barbeque and we know people are coming over. They like their wine or they like their beer with food. It’s not an issue. Ten to fifteen percent of the people out there have the type of body that has an issue with metabolizing the alcohol that throws them into an addictive cycle. For them, alcohol is a really bad idea. For other people, a moderate or a temperate drinker seem to enjoy it. It’s not evil in and of itself. The reaction that happens with the alcoholic is a real problem and needs to be addressed, but alcohol itself is not really the issue.

*“We are careful never to show intolerance or hatred of drinking as an institution. Experience shows that such an attitude is not helpful to anyone. Every new alcoholic looks for the spirit among us and is immensely relieved when he finds that we are not witch burners. A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved had it not been for such stupidity.”* Let’s look at that sentence fairly closely, it says if we’re stupid, we can cause somebody to die, it’s incumbent upon us to learn what we can about this illness, about the recovery process, get our own experience with this and use some good common sense when dealing with other people. Because if we’re stupid or if we do it wrong, we can

kill people. And we won't be blamed for it, they will. Everybody will say, "He drank himself to death." But the fact of the matter is that you could very easily make a case for contributory manslaughter for this guy's death because you're doing something stupid.

*"We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good. For not one drinker in a thousand likes to be talked to about alcohol by one who hates it. Some day we hope that Alcoholics Anonymous will help the public to greater realization of the gravity of the alcoholic problem but we shall be of little use if our attitude is one of bitterness or hostility. Drinkers will not stand for it."* "After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides we have stopped fighting anything or anybody. We have to." Our problems are of our own making and bottles are only a symbol. The bottle is not the problem. We're the problem. We've made the problem. Our alcoholism is the problem.

Many people like to hide behind anonymity and go underground when they get sober. So, picture the cops, picture the ER doctors, picture the judges, all they ever see are the alcoholics and the jackpots. Very rarely does somebody with two, five, fifteen or twenty years sober go up to those individuals and say, "Hey, I just want to tell you something.....I've been sober all these years and I just want you to know that treatment works and recovery happens. You can stay sober." That's almost unheard of. But you know what? If you ever want to have fair and equitable insurance payments for the treatment of alcoholism, if you ever want to remove the sixty percent of the people in the prison populations who are there because of property crimes or drug possessions feeding their addictions, if you ever want to do anything about those monstrously huge social issues, we need to put in front of everybody we can put in front of the fact that this is an illness, this is treatable and recovery is possible. And every single one of us should be shouting that from the rooftops and that is not an anonymity break. We don't admit our membership in a twelve step fellowship in press, radio and film, but we should be saying that we are recovered and we can help others to become recovered as well.

It's only an anonymity break if you admit that you're a member in a specific twelve step fellowship in press, radio, or film, with your picture and last name.

Let's now look at The Spiritual Experience in the appendix in the back of this book. Because having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics, and practice these principles in all of our affairs. Let's look a little bit at what they say about the spiritual experience or spiritual awakening.

*"The terms spiritual experience and spiritual awakening are used many times in this book, which upon careful reading shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms."* The personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism, that's what we're looking for, that's what the Doctor's Opinion was saying was needed, that's a part of the spiritual awakening, having a personality change. We are acting differently and we're thinking differently so that's got to be a personality change.

MM: So, Chris, don't you think for those of us who have been around a bit and seen people come and go and so forth that it will probably be more than obvious to us that the person's got a different personality? These things manifest themselves among us in many different forms. After this work we are not the same person. You're either going to grow or you're going to go. Nobody's just going to be able to stay around cranky. It's very rare that that happens, when that does happen in the recovery fellowships, they're not alcoholics, they're heavy drinkers that can just tough it out.

The alcoholic is the type of person who can't tough out something like that. *"Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes or religious experiences must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals, happily for everyone this conclusion is erroneous."* What happened upon the publication of the first printing of the big book, was people who got the book were waiting for the white light experience that Bill talked about his story. Where's my white light? Where's the wind of the spirit blowing up and through me? Upon careful reading, you'll understand that the spiritual awakening is the result of the steps. People were thinking that you just got it.

One of the reasons for doing this appendix was to clear up some of those issues. *"In the first few chapters, a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover, they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming God consciousness, followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. Among our rapidly growing fellowship of thousands of alcoholics, such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of us experience what the psychologist William James calls the educational variety because they develop slowly over a period of time."* So, you can have rapid transformations, or you can have the educational variety that goes slowly over a period of time. Why do you think that is? It's because some of us work the steps quickly and some of us slowly.

*"Quite often, friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life, that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone."* So here's another description of the spiritual awakening. It's a profound alteration in your reaction to life. That's one of the attributes of a spiritual awakening. *"What often takes place in a few months could seldom be accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions, our members find that they have tapped an unsuspecting inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it God-consciousness. Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problem in light of our experience..."* what that means is, anybody capable of getting through the steps can recover.

*"...provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial."* One of the sad things we see today in some support groups is intolerant and belligerent denial when somebody is talking about their own personal recovery process, because it's not somebody else's experience because they did the don't drink and go to meetings thing. They've got intolerant and belligerent denial to people who are speaking

from their own experience about recovery

You couldn't convince these people they don't understand. They've been sponsoring people for twenty years, but they don't have a clue. *"We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery but these are indispensable"*.

And here's a Herbert Spencer quote: *"There's a principle which is a bar against all information which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance. That principle is contempt prior to investigation."*

We can have spiritual experiences every step we take, every good deed we do, you can have a spiritual experience but that's finite. Spiritual awakening is on a much grander scale and it truly is the awakening of one's divine inner spirit that really happens through the work and it certainly happens with a full-blown attempt at seeking God and trying to seek what God would have you be and do. Praying and meditating to try to get closer to that power which many of us call God that is keeping us safe and protected, allowing us the opportunity, the power and direction to rebuild our lives.

## To Wives 1

Sometimes the last four chapters are overlooked during big book studies. Sometimes we thought, "Okay, I can skip that chapter. I'm not a wife." Some of us saw the chapter The Family Afterward, and thought to yourself, "I don't have a family afterward." My family left. But there's so much information in these chapters. There are principles, there's philosophy, there's perspectives that we can really find guiding if we pay attention to them.

There's a very important piece in this chapter, the description of the types of alcoholics/drinkers, one, two, three and four. It explains the progressive scale of alcoholism and it enables you to place your husband or your loved one into a category, how powerless are they, how much trouble are they in. That information should be used for sponsors, it's a good gauge to judge how far down the scale have we gone

Any legitimate treatment center these days want to engage the family in the recovery and treatment process because they realize how pivotal it is for those closest to an alcoholic to have the right attitude, to have the right behavior when you're confronted with an active alcoholic and with one who's struggling their way into recovery. So there's information here we could all use. You could almost title this chapter To the Sponsor or To the Family Member, and it would be valid. When you look back at some of the history of this fellowship and its co-founders, you look under some rocks and you find some stuff that didn't make it into the conference approved literature. One of the things was, Bill and Bob did not want women in AA. They certainly wanted to have them in the meetings but they didn't want them as members in Alcoholics Anonymous. And there needed to be some things that really changed that for them. You needed to understand the time. You need to put this all in context. The mid 30s was a very much different time than we have today as far as equality, equal rights and equal perspective on the sexes. Back then, it was a man's world. They really thought by bringing women into, as members of the fellowship, that was going to mess it up.

And they avoided that for a while, Florence Rankin was the first one woman battled her way into a meeting and insisted on membership, and they thought, "All right. Okay." So they acquiesced and over the course of time women are nudging toward the fifty percent barrier in Alcoholics Anonymous today. But again, why hasn't the discriminatory perspective of women that comes through in this chapter changed? They're afraid to change anything in this book because it's led to so many recoveries. They don't know how much they can take out without losing some of the magic.

Most of the people who are advocates of the book Alcoholics Anonymous get freaked out when there's any motion on any table to make any changes in this book, so, we're going to have this document in its present form for a long time to come. We would rather explain away some of the problems with how it was written and the way it was written than we would to allow some staff member in New York to rewrite it.

Everyone in Alcoholics Anonymous back then had gone through the steps. You're very much left alone in today's fellowship and a lot of times people that take service commitments and upon their way down the service level from GSR to DSM to, all the way to trustees and board members, there's no litmus test for, hey, have you actually recovered? Have you actually taken the steps? Have you gone out and made your amends? How's your prayer and meditation? How many people have you worked with, have you taken through this work? Those aren't questions that get asked. They got asked back around the time that this book was written but they don't get asked now. So you can be placing this document in the hands of people who absolutely have no experience with it, don't understand the importance of it, don't recognize it from an experiential level, just see it as an old book that needs to be re-edited, and we would never want that to happen. Back in 1939, you're looking at almost a hundred percent of the people had gone through the steps. You look today in and twelve step fellowship and you're looking at an extreme minority of people who actually have real experience with this program.

This is some of the oral tradition that wraps around this chapter. Bill Wilson understands that he needs to address the wives and he doesn't feel real comfortable doing it so he asks Ann Smith if she will write it. Ann Smith is Doctor Bob's wife, one of the most overlooked figures in Alcoholics Anonymous history. Bill Wilson didn't call her one of the founders, but the fact of the matter is when Bill Wilson moved out to Akron, Ann Smith was running Oxford Group meetings. Anne and Henrietta Siberling and a number of other people had been doing it for years. They would do the guided meditations, they would read from the Bible, they would practice these spiritual principles and Bill and Bob were coming in and learning from Ann Smith and Henrietta Siberling and a number of other people in the Oxford Group.

They were learning their spiritual disciplines. So when Bill Wilson decides, "I need to have a chapter written by a wife", he

felt really comfortable aiming that at Ann Smith. Ann declined. Now meanwhile, Lois is waiting in the wings going, "Oh, he's going to ask me now." He never does. Instead he comes to the conclusion that he should write the chapter to wives. So what we're going to be reading is Bill Wilson pretending he's a wife. Let's just use that as a context and that should not negate any of the importance of the material in here but it is kind of a skewed perspective and can even lead to more of the chauvinistic verbiage that you're going to find in here. But we should set all that aside and we should look for the principles and the perspective because those are right on the money.

*"With few exceptions our book thus far has spoken of men but what we have said applies quite as much to women. Our activities on behalf of women who drink are on the increase. There is every evidence that women regain their health as readily as men if they try our suggestion."* Again, here Bill is talking about something that he doesn't have a lot of experience with yet, however he was right. He usually was right. There really had only been one woman in the meetings at that time and she relapsed.

*"But for every man who drinks, others are involved...the wife who trembles in fear of the next debauch, the mother and father who see their son wasting away. Among us are wives, relatives and friends whose problems have been solved as well as some who have not yet found a happy solution. We want the wives of Alcoholics Anonymous to address the wives of men who drink too much. What they say will apply to nearly everyone bound by ties of blood or affection to an alcoholic. As wives of Alcoholics Anonymous, we would like you to feel that we understand as perhaps few can. We want to analyze mistakes we have made. We want to leave you with the feeling that no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome. We have traveled a rocky road. There is no mistake about that. We have had long rendezvous with hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding and fear. These are not pleasant companions. We have been driven to maudlin sympathy, to bitter resentments. Some of us have veered from extreme to extreme, ever hoping that one day our loved ones would be themselves once more."* That is one of the saddest things with people who love alcoholics. They're not going to understand the nature of alcoholism. They're really going to keep thinking things like, "When it gets really bad, I'm sure he's just going to stop" or "It can't get much worse than this. I know he loves me." There are all of these perspectives that have to do with the misunderstanding that loved ones have that the alcoholic can do better, that the alcoholic can stop drinking, that the alcoholic can stop behaving badly. There's a complete misunderstanding that if they just really want to get better, they will. So that causes a lot of problems. You hang in there with somebody and you're not promoting their own recovery. You're not doing things that are conducive to them finding recovery. You're just hoping that they'll hitch up their bootstrap and get about their life. And that comes from a complete misunderstanding of how aggressive an illness alcoholism is.

This is much more about; do you have a body and a mind that is going to be susceptible to addictive illness? If you do and you partake at all of alcohol or drugs, you're going to become addicted or alcoholic. It has to do with a predisposition and yes, it can be inherited. We find that certain types of families or certain types of ethnic backgrounds have a higher percentage of alcoholism. It can be inherited but is that really your fault as a parent if your child has addictive tendencies? It's really more physiological than it is environmental.

There's this huge movement today within the twelve step organizations that really think that talking about your alcoholic thinking or the stupid things you did today, sitting in a circle for an hour, updating everybody about how they're thinking is conducive to recovery. We don't know where that came from. Many of us are not interested in what's going on and many times when we are sitting in a support group and people are doing that, we are thinking, "Why don't you tell a bunch of people that actually care what's going on in your life? We don't happen to be someone who needs to hear it. But when somebody calls us up for help and they share a situation that's a challenge, we give them an exercise to do. It can be to do a fourth step on it, it can be to go make an amends on it. It can be pray on it. It can be go work with another alcoholic. We are not going to sit there and pat them on the head and say, "Oh, you're doing wonderful." Obviously, they're not doing wonderful if they've still got these issues. Let's learn how to live so we're not constantly churning up all the old crap. The same energy you're using to rehash situations you find uncomfortable could be used to resolve them with the program or you could actually be helping another alcoholic.

You could be talking about a solution. But in a beginner's meeting it's quite appropriate to just let them rant on because they are still on the spin-dry cycle. Then they should be qualified quickly and offered a chance to go through the steps. A good beginner's meeting will have a bunch of people in it who have got some time, who have recovered from alcoholism and can share their experience, strength and hope about how you can get away from all of that. We should not be interested in people that want to help you manage a life that you have already admitted is unmanageable

One of the reasons why you find that some support group meetings have devolved into bad group therapy is because it comes out of the treatment centers that have group. There's a lot of treatment centers where you sit you around in group doing conflict resolution and there's actual reasons that in a clinical setting they'll do that with you. But don't bring that into a recovery meeting. Treatment is about discovery. A twelve step fellowship is about recovery. Those are really two different things and it's time to move away from treatment, toward recovery and start looking forward in your life.

CS: Monty, what's really sad is there's been some modern studies that show that there's no efficacy in the confrontational methodology in treatment.

Some of the bad therapeutic community's would do things like shaving half of somebody's head and making them beg to have the other half shaved, to these confrontational type of groups where people just beat each other up. There's no efficacy in it. There's nothing that shows that it's helpful at all in the recovery from alcoholism or drug addiction. Why people do it goes all the way back to the early Synanon and therapeutic community models where people were coming out of prisons. You've got to keep them in shape somehow. But as far as just addiction and alcoholism, this is not an

effective way to work and this is backed up by new literature coming out on what really works and what doesn't work in treatment, We're dealing with an incredibly misunderstood illness, alcoholism, and it's misunderstood by people that treat you for it.

Not every treatment professional treating you for alcoholism is an alcoholic that's gone through the twelve steps and had a spiritual awakening. A lot of times it's not. A lot of times it's somebody who graduated a counselor program and they don't have any experience with the twelve steps. They know the theories but knowing the theories and actually being able to share an experience are two different things.

*"Our loyalty and desire that our husbands hold up their heads and behave like other men have begotten all sorts of predicaments. We have been unselfish and self-sacrificing. We have told innumerable lies to protect our pride and our husbands' reputations. We have prayed. We have begged. We have been patient. We have struck out viciously. We have run away. We have been hysterical. We have been terror-stricken. We have sought sympathy. We have had retaliatory love affairs with other men." "Our homes have been battlegrounds many an evening. In the morning we have kissed and made up. Our friends have counseled chucking the men and we have done so with finality only to be back in a little while, hoping, always hoping. Our men have sworn great solemn oaths that they are through drinking forever. We have believed them when no one else could or would. Then in days, weeks, or months, a fresh outburst. We seldom had friends to our homes, never knowing how or when the men of the house would appear. We could make few social engagements. We came to live almost alone. When we were invited out, our husbands sneaked so many drinks that they spoiled the occasion. If on the other hand, they took nothing, their self-pity made them killjoys."*

*"There was never financial security. Positions were always in jeopardy or gone. An armored car could not have brought home the pay envelope. The checking account melted like snow in June. Sometimes there were other women. How heart-breaking was this discovery? How cruel to be told they understood our men as we did not? The bill collectors, the sheriffs, the angry taxi drivers, the policemen, the bums, the pals, even the ladies they sometimes brought home, our husbands thought we were so inhospitable. Joy killer, nag, wet blanket, that's what they had said. Next day they would be themselves again and we would forgive and try to forget. We have tried to hold the love of our children for their father. We have told small tots that their father was sick which was much nearer the truth than we realized. They struck the children, kicked out door panels, smashed treasured crockery and ripped the keys out of pianos." "In the midst of such pandemonium, they may have rushed out, threatening to live with the other woman forever. In desperation, we have even gotten tight ourselves, the drunk to end all drunks. The unexpected result was that our husbands seemed to like it. Perhaps at this point we got a divorce and took the children home to Father and Mother. Then we were severely criticized by our husbands' parents for desertion. Usually we did not leave*

Many of us think that the only reason someone should leave is if you're getting really emotionally ill in a relationship. In other words, if you're deteriorating really badly, there's abuse and you're suffering emotionally. If that is going on, we can see someone leaving. But what we hate to see is the wife or the husband stick with the alcoholic through thick or thin, they get sober and they meet somebody in the first year or two in the recovery fellowships and run off with them. We have seen that happen time and time again and that's not Recovery, that's untreated alcoholism, because there is an attachment to moral and spiritual values in a recovery program. You're not to leave because you're selfish and you want to leave, you found a younger woman somewhere or something. That's not a good enough reason to leave. However if there's abuse, if there's violence and if day after day it's getting worse and worse emotionally, and you're becoming psychically ill because of a relationship, then that's usually because there's abuse or violence in it, then we can see that as a valid reason for separation. We knocked this family down, we need to take responsibility for putting it back up. That's recovery, splitting and running is certainly not recovery.

*,"We stayed on and on. We finally sought employment ourselves as destitution faced ourselves and our families. We began to ask medical advice on the spree as the sprees got closer, the alarming physical and mental symptoms, the deepening tale of remorse, depression and inferiority that settled down on our loved ones. These things terrified and distracted us. As animals on a treadmill, we have patiently and wearily climbed, falling back in exhaustion after every futile effort to reach solid ground. Most of us have entered the final stage with its commitment to health resorts, sanitariums, hospitals and jails. Sometimes there were screaming delirium and insanity. Death was often near." The majority of alcoholics showing up in the support groups today have not gotten to this point. There are all types of intervention and awareness and treatment. It's not as dark and misunderstood as it was back in the 30,s.*

*"Under these conditions, we naturally made mistakes. Some of them rose out of ignorance of alcoholism. Sometimes we sensed dimly that we were dealing with sick men. Had we fully understood the nature of the alcoholic illness, we might have behaved differently." Now that's an important sentence. Today they engage the family in treatment processes and there's almost always a reluctance for the family to do that. They'll say, "I'm not the alcoholic. He's the alcoholic. Why do I have to do all this stuff?" Well, because you need to understand how you can be more conducive to the recovery process. There are attitudes and behaviors that you could have that could make things worse or that could make things better. And you don't know what they are, because you have no understanding of alcoholism as an illness or recovery as a process. How much do you want your loved one to get better? If you really want your loved one to get better, take the time and participate in a family program. There's AL Anon, there's A lateen, you can go to any of them and you can start to learn how to act, how to think and how to behave differently so that the alcoholic has a better chance of recovery.*

*"How could men who love their wives and children be so unthinking, so callous, so cruel? There could be no love in such persons, we thought. And just as we were being convinced of their heartlessness, they would surprise us with fresh resolves and new attention. For awhile, they would be their old sweet selves, only to dash the new structure of affection*

to pieces once more. Ask why they commenced to drink again, they would reply with some silly excuse or none. It was so baffling, so heart-breaking. Could we have been so mistaken in the men we married? When drinking, they were strangers. Sometimes they were so inaccessible that it seemed as though a great wall had been built around them. Even if they did not love their families, how could they be so blind about themselves? What had become of their judgment, their common sense, their willpower? Why could they not see that drink meant ruin to them? Why was it that when these dangers were pointed out, they agreed and then got drunk again immediately?" You have to understand the first step. You have to understand powerlessness to be able to answer that question.

"These are some of the questions that race through the mind of every woman who has an alcoholic husband. We hope this book has answered some of them. Perhaps your husband has been living in that strange world of alcoholism where everything is distorted and exaggerated. You can see that he really does love you with his better self. Of course there is such a thing as incompatibility, but in nearly every instance, the alcoholic only seems to be unloving and inconsiderate. It is usually because he is warped and sickened that he says and does these appalling things. Today most of our men are better husbands and fathers than ever before."

"Try not to condemn your alcoholic husband, no matter what he says or does. He is just another very sick, unreasonable person. Treat him when you can as though he had pneumonia. When he angers you, remember that he is very ill. There is one important exception to the foregoing. We realize that some men are thoroughly bad intentioned and that no amount of patience will make any difference. An alcoholic of this temperament may be quick to use this chapter as a club over your head. Don't let him get away with it. If you are positive he is one of this type, you may feel you had better leave. Is it right to let him ruin your life and the lives of your children, especially when he has before him a way of life, a way to stop his drinking and abuse if he really wants to pay the price?" That's an important paragraph. hopefully the alcoholic in the family has read this book so you've showed them there is a way out. Are you willing to do this? And if the husband says, "No, I'm not willing to do it," you need to make the decision, do you want to keep on 'til the bitter end experiencing all the consequences of a chronic slide to death, or should you separate yourself and your family.

You can use some of the worst things that happened to you as assets today in your work with other people. You find when you go through the steps and you take responsibility for your alcoholic behavior, you can move away and be free of it.

## To Wives 2

This chapter because has a lot of material that one would benefit from if they're dealing with an alcoholic. We believe that the information can also be used by a sponsor. It can be used by a wife, by a husband, a family member, an employer, or anyone else who may be able to impact an alcoholic. It gives you the information to be effective at making the decisions and having the behavior conducive to someone finding recovery.

There are some things that we can do that can be enabling or co-dependent. In this chapter, it lays out a way where you can be helpful. We're going to start on the four categories of alcoholics/heavy drinkers. One of the things that we believe we've really lost sight of in the twelve step fellowships and even lost sight of it in the treatment industry itself is how to categorize the alcoholic. Where are they on the scale of alcoholism? In one of the ninth step promises, it says no matter how far down the scale you've gone; you'll find that your experience can benefit others. So there's a scale.

Some are sicker than others. Then there's another great line in one of the earlier chapters that says that your ability to quit on a non-spiritual basis will depend upon how much lack of power and choice in drink you've had. So the scale isn't really how many cars you've crashed, how many years you've spent in prison or how many jobs you lost. The scale is a scale of lack of power, choice and control. An alcoholic who's never gotten in any trouble and only drank at home can be worse off than somebody that's doing ten years for multiple vehicular manslaughters. The consequences can happen to heavy drinkers. The consequences are one thing, but that scale of lack of power, choice and control is very, very important for us to understand. And it's not something that's talked about very much in recovery meetings because it's become politically incorrect, we are told to identify and not compare. It's not really defined in treatment because there's no upside for a treatment center to categorize you as an alcohol abuser or alcohol-dependent. Everybody's a paying customer and they need to treat everybody.

But, if you're moving into a twelve step recovery program, it's important for you to know where you are because that's going to point to how much intensity, how much involvement you're going to have to have in this recovery process. If you're really in trouble, if you've really gone down the scale of power, choice and control, you need to get busy and you need to get busy right away.

If you are a type one, maybe you don't even need a recovery process, you may be able to just quit. "The problem with which you struggle usually falls within one of four categories." "One, your husband may only be a heavy drinker. His drinking may become constant or it may be heavy on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment to you and his friends. He is positive that he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is filled with people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after awhile."

So this is saying you can spend too much money, it can slow you up mentally and physically, you can be embarrassed

because you get really drunk and do stupid things. But they're not saying that is an alcoholic. They're saying that this is a heavy drinker. A lot of times in twelve step fellowships, heavy drinkers, heavy drug users, end up in the fellowships because of an intervention of one kind or another. Maybe they just want to change their life, somebody has pointed them toward the rooms and they'll show up. They don't necessarily have to work the steps the way an alcoholic does. They don't necessarily have to become consistent with meetings. A lot of times what will happen is they'll come around for awhile and then slowly back away and then disappear and learn that they can stay stopped on their own willpower, or they can even moderate. That happens quite often. That's type one.

*"Type two...your husband is showing a lack of control, for he is unable to stay on the water wagon, even when he wants to. He often gets entirely out of hand when drinking. He admits this is true but is positive that he will do better. He has begun to try, with or without your cooperation, various means of moderating or staying dry. Maybe he is beginning to lose his friends. His business may suffer somewhat. He is worried at times and is becoming aware that he cannot drink like other people. He sometimes drinks in the morning and through the day also to hold his nervousness in check. He is remorseful after serious drinking bouts and tells you he wants to stop but when he gets over the spree, he begins to drink once more. He begins to think once more that he can drink moderately next time. We think this person is in danger. These are the earmarks of the real alcoholic. Perhaps he can still tend to business fairly well. He has by no means ruined everything. As we say among ourselves, he wants to want to stop."*

This is probably the majority of the people that show up in the twelve step fellowships. They are somewhere between a type one and a type two. But let's just look at the type two. He's showing a lack of control. He can't quit even when he wants to. After a binge, he'll come out of it and he'll want to stop but then he'll convince himself that he's going to drink moderately next time and he'll start drinking again. *"Sometimes he drinks in the morning and throughout the day to hold his nervousness in check"*. That nervousness is an actual detoxification from alcohol. That high level of anxiety is a part of a detoxing process.

They say "we think this person is in danger". "These are the earmarks of a real alcoholic". This is when you're becoming a chronic alcoholic, when you start to show these signs. And the first and most important sign is you can't quit even when you want to. That's really the main earmark of the alcoholic.

We think we're predisposed to chronic alcoholism. There's a heavy genetic component that leads to the relationship we have with alcohol, how we metabolize alcohol. We think it's directly proportional to genetics but to become alcoholic, there's some drinking that's usually involved. It would be very difficult to say, "I'm an alcoholic but I've never had a drink". Most people wouldn't buy that argument. But there are genetic studies finding that there's not just one alcoholic gene. There may be many, but through the genome mapping process, some clinicians and researchers have said that very soon, if you want to pay for it, you can have your child tested and they'll be able to predict fairly accurately whether or not if they start drinking they'll become alcoholic. They'll go into full-blown alcoholism.

Also if you look at cultural or anthropological studies, you'll find that certain cultures have a very low rate of alcoholism and some have a very high rate of alcoholism. Look at the First Nation Americans or the Irish. They're going to have a really high level of alcoholism. Look at some cultures in South America or Indo-China and you're going to find that there is an incredibly low percentage of alcoholism. So it can be cultural, but that cultural component ties back to genetics in a way we don't understand completely yet. But the fact of the matter is whether you become alcoholic because your drinking gets out of control or you're out of control as soon as you start drinking; many times our personal experience was we showed signs of alcoholism the first time we drank.

Many of us will start by having a couple of drinks with a friend and the phenomenon of craving took over and we drank as much as we could until we passed out and that was the pattern of our drinking from that day forward. There was very little ability for us to moderate. Many of us had a heavy genetic component right off the bat. We were predisposed to alcoholism. All we had to do was put alcohol in our body and we turned it on. But we see other people who drank relatively reasonably for a period of years. It progressed into alcoholism. So we don't think there's a hard and fast rule. We think that there's a spectrum where we can place ourselves in how alcoholism manifested in our lives, whether slowly or whether quickly. But the fact of the matter is once you are alcoholic, and you have crossed the line, there's very little hope of your recovery on your own unaided will. And that's what this book is about. It's saying you're in trouble. Let us tell you what we did to get out of trouble.

And in this chapter, it's saying here's what alcoholic progression is going to look like. Here's what alcoholism is going to show up like. Pay attention to this because if your husband is acting this way, he's this far gone. We can use this. We can see type one, two, three and four personally as people who have alcohol problems or who are alcoholic. We can find where they are in this. If they are a type two, three or four, they need to be practicing recovery principles in their life in a big way if they want to survive. They need to be participating in the recovery process that unblocks them from the sunlight of the spirit every single day.

And this information helps them to conclude that they suffer from alcoholism, helps them to then ask God for the help, the strength and direction to do this work, and then start to participate in the things they need to participate in so that God can do God's job.

*"Husband number three. This husband has gone much further than husband number two. Though once like number two, he became worse. His friends have slipped away. His home is in a near wreck and he cannot hold a position. Maybe the doctor has been called in and a weary round of sanitariums and hospitals..." or rehabs and detoxes..."has begun. He admits he cannot drink like other people but he does not see why. He clings to the notion that he will yet find a way to do so. He may have come to the point where he desperately wants to stop but cannot. His case presents additional*

*questions which we will try to answer for you. You can be quite hopeful of a situation like this."*

Now why are they saying that? As the person gets worse, why are they saying you can be hopeful? We believe it's because the closer we get to a full concession of our powerlessness, the closer we as alcoholics get to accurately assessing how much trouble we're in, the more enthusiasm and motivation we're going to have for practicing a recovery program. We believe that nobody wants to practice this program through virtue and few people will even believe this will work for them. Many alcoholics truly think they're so different. They may believe that this has worked for others but lack the confidence that it will work for them, so sometimes a desperation is needed for motivation. Many of us who were type three's didn't have any friends any more, our home was in a near wreck, we could not hold a position, and we started the weary round of sanitariums and hospitals. We had gone to outpatient or to in-patient. We were trying to show up at some support group meetings but somewhere in the back of our mind, it was very difficult to realize that we are going to have to quit drinking for good and for all. That was a very difficult concept for some of us to come up with.

*"Type four...you may have a husband of whom you completely despair. He has been placed in one institution after another. He is violent or appears definitely insane when drunk. Sometimes he drinks on the way home from the hospital." Or home from the detox or home from the rehab. "Perhaps he has had delirium tremens." "Doctors may shake their heads and advise you to have him committed. Maybe you have already been obliged to put him away. This picture may not be as dark as it looks. Many of our husbands were just as far gone, yet they got well." The worse you become, the more hope these early Alcoholics Anonymous members have for you. Now type four is not the typical person that's showing up in the twelve step fellowships. But every once in a while, one will come in and a lot of times the groups, because they have so many type ones and type twos, don't have the capacity to know how to deal with a type four. What will happen is that person will come to a few meetings and get a coffee commitment and relapse. And then the group members who are the type ones and type twos will say, "Well, he just wasn't being honest" or "He probably didn't want it enough" or "Stick with the winners, he's one of the losers."*

They won't understand that the type four needs to start working the steps right away or they will continue to relapse. We need to get this person to some power that can relieve this obsession to drink. If group members are not about that, if they are just telling them to not drink, go to meetings, keep coming back, you don't get it, it gets you, they are going to kill this guy, because he's a type four. They are going to kill him and you won't even know that they are doing that. Some members have a complete misunderstanding about what needs to happen with a type four because they are a type one and a type two who have been able to stay sober just by going to meetings. Many think if a new member relapses it's their own fault, but you're placing the responsibility of someone's success on the person who is powerless.

That's a complete abdication of the principles inherent in this book. This book tells you if you don't handle this person right, he could die. Most of the fellowships have become so watered down that that's not a concept that's easily assimilated in some of these groups. They have become meeting dependent and sometimes don't have member who take others through the steps as a basic initiation process. There are plug in the jug groups. Just put the plug in the jug. They don't realize that the type three and the type four are "plugless". They don't have a plug. If you're powerless, that means you're "plugless". So again, there's a lot of misunderstanding out there and way too many people die that really shouldn't have to.

If you're in a group where you're a type one or type two, there's nothing wrong with that. If the majority of the group are type one or type twos, just understand that if somebody comes in and they've been in twelve treatment centers and they haven't been able to put two weeks together in ten years, you are dealing a type three or type four. Get them to somebody with the experience that will be able to help them. Get them to somebody that's been through these steps if you haven't. You may not be the person to help them but at least try to get them to somebody who can.

If you're a type one or a type two, you have no experience with these levels of powerlessness so you don't understand it. You were able to just solve your problem by going to a few meetings every week. Why can't this guy? Bill Wilson said, "The sole purpose of an AA group is the teaching and the practice of the twelve steps. So that's the sole purpose of a group. There are many groups that you would walk into and you would say, "Man, that's not what this group is doing." And that's okay too. That's fine, but when somebody shows up at your group who needs a group that's sole purpose is the teaching and practice of the twelve steps, take them to it. You can usually find them in meeting books because they will say Big Book Discussion.

Usually the groups that are Big Book groups are going to have people with experience to get somebody help who are powerless. The statement of purpose for AA says, "when someone reaches out for the hand of AA, the hand of AA must always be there". That's not just, hey, here's my phone number, here's a meeting book, see you later. The responsibility is much deeper than that. Remember the early AA's brought types threes and fours into their homes or worked with them in hospitals. Sometimes because of lack of ability to detox, lack of treatment centers, we need to step up and do that today

*"Let's now go back to husband number one. Oddly enough, he is often difficult to deal with. He enjoys drinking. It stirs his imagination. His friends feel closer over a highball. Perhaps you enjoy drinking with him yourself when he doesn't go too far. You have passed happy evenings together, chatting and drinking before your fire. Perhaps you both like parties which would be dull without liquor. We've enjoyed such evenings ourselves. We have had a good time. We know all about liquor as a social lubricant. Some but not all of us think it has its advantages when reasonably used." "The first principle of success is that you should never be angry". "Even though your husband becomes unbearable and you have to leave him temporarily, you should, if you can, go without rancor. Patience and good temper are most necessary." That's one of the things that's very difficult for family members to come up with. "Our next thought is that you should*

*never tell him what he should do about his drinking. If he gets the idea you are a nag or a killjoy, your chance of accomplishing anything useful may be zero. He will use that as an excuse to drink more. He will tell you he is misunderstood. This may lead to lonely evenings for you. He may seek someone else to console him, not always another man. Be determined your husband's drinking is not going to spoil your relations with your children or your friends. They need your companionship and your help. It is possible to have a full and a useful life though your husband continues to drink.*" This is something you see in the family groups that absolutely amazes us. If a twelve step family group member is working a program, they can be in the midst of an absolute hurricane of alcoholism and be able to keep their poise and their serenity. It truly is unbelievable.

*"We know women who are unafraid, even happy, under these conditions. Do not set your heart on reforming your husband. You may be unable to do so no matter how hard you try."* If someone is beyond human aid, that means they're certainly beyond the aid of a wife or a husband. The wife and the husband are not going to have the power to get the person sober, but they can manipulate the situation to lead toward the alcoholic getting sober.

*"We know these suggestions are sometimes difficult to follow but you will save many a heartbreak if you can succeed in observing them. Your husband may come to appreciate your reasonableness and patience. This may lay the groundwork for a friendly talk about his alcoholic problem. Try to have him bring up the subject himself. Be sure you are not critical during such a discussion. Attempt instead to put yourself in his place. Let him see that you want to be helpful rather than critical. When a discussion does arise, you might suggest he read this book or at least the chapter on alcoholism. Tell him you have been worried, though, perhaps needlessly. You think he ought to know the subject better as everyone should have a clear understanding of the risks he takes if he drinks too much. Show him you have confidence in his power to stop or moderate. Say you do not want to be a wet blanket that you only want to help him take care of his health. Thus you may succeed in interesting him in alcoholism."*

What they're trying to do is get the person ready to read the book. *"He probably has several alcoholics among his own acquaintance. You might suggest that you both take an interest in them. Drinkers like to help other drinkers. Your husband may be willing to talk to one of them. If this kind of approach does not catch your husband's interest, it may best to drop the subject. But after a friendly talk, your husband will usually revive the topic himself. This may take patient waiting but it will be worth it. Meanwhile, you might try to help the wife of another serious drinker. If you act upon these principles, your husband may stop or moderate. Suppose, however, that your husband fits the description of number two. The same principles which apply to husband number one should be practiced, but after his next binge, ask him if he would really like to get over drinking for good. Do not ask that he do it for you or anyone else, just would he like to do it."* So up until this last paragraph, we've been talking about the type one, which is basically the problem drinker or the heavy drinker.

Now they're starting to talk about how you handle somebody who shows a real lack of control, who actually wants at times to quit drinking but cannot. *"The chances are that he would like to quit. Show him your copy of this book and tell him what you've found out about alcoholism. Show him that as alcoholics, the writers of the book understand. Tell him some of the interesting stories you have read. If you think he will be shy of a spiritual remedy, ask him to look at the chapter on alcoholism, then perhaps he will be interested enough to continue. If he is enthusiastic, your cooperation will mean a great deal. If he is lukewarm or thinks he is not an alcoholic, we suggest you leave him alone. Avoid urging him to follow our program. The seed has been planted in his mind. He knows that thousands of men, much like himself, have recovered, but don't remind him of this after he had been drinking for he may be angry. Sooner or later, you are likely to find him reading the book once more. Wait until repeated stumbling convinces him he must act, for the more you hurry him, the longer his recovery may be delayed."*

Again, in the chapter Working with Others, it says sometimes we need to wait for someone to go on a spree before we can approach him. Because nobody who's having a good time drinking or they think its working is going to be interested in this. But a type two, three and four, get into real problems with their drinking. They do incredibly stupid, tragic things. They get to a point where they're humiliated and they start to despise the way they've been acting. And sometimes those are the times when they can be receptive to offering a hand.

*"If you have a number three husband, you may be in luck."* "Being certain he wants to stop, you can go to him with this volume as joyfully as though you had struck oil. He may not share your enthusiasm, but he is practically sure to read the book and he may go for the program at once. If he does not, you will probably not have long to wait. Again, do not crowd him. Let him decide for himself. Cheerfully see him through more sprees. Talk about his condition or this book only when he raises the issue. In some cases, it may be better to let someone outside of the family present the book. They can urge action without arousing hostility. If your husband is otherwise a normal individual, your chances are good at this stage." Remember, it doesn't say in here try to get him to a meeting. It does not say that, but it's the first thing most people try to do. It says leave him the book because the book will show what you need to do to recover. A lot of times if you show up at a meeting, that's going to just confuse you. *"You would suppose that men in the fourth classification would be quite hopeless but that is not so."*

A good twelve step family group member is not going to come down hard on the alcoholic. They're not going to enable the alcoholic; they will see them as a sick person. If someone was suffering from cancer in your family and they started vomiting and they got a little bit of vomit on the rug and they acted really grumpy the night before, would you sit there and yell at them and berate them the next day for how they acted? No. So what this book is trying to urge is that we look upon these people as if they're sick, not as if they're stupid or weak but as if they're sick. It's your quality of life that we're talking about. Why walk around sullen and resentful all of the time? That's taking away from your quality of life.

But with type three, if they really want to stop, tell them there's a solution. There's a solution. Here's the book and recommend they read it. Let them come to the conclusion that maybe this will work for them and then they might come back to you and say, "Can you help me with this? How do I move forward with this?" And then you've got them. That's when you bring the AA members over and get the whole twelve step process going.

Alcoholism is one of the only illnesses that people really think that somebody's doing it to themselves. And in a way, it is. It's a self-imposed crisis but you cannot postpone it or evade it. And it deserves some sympathy, it deserves some understanding, if you're a family member, but you need to know that there are actions you can take that are conducive to recovery, so when the right time comes, help the person find their way into recovery, not necessarily the meetings, but into recovery. Certainly there are a lot of times you're going to end up in meetings if you're in recovery, there's no doubt about that. But this book was way more concerned with you finding someone who can take you through the steps than finding someone who can take you to a meeting.

And that's something that's really been lost in the last fifty years or so and it's a shame. We think a lot of people have died needlessly because of it. *"You would suppose that men in the fourth classification would be quite hopeless but that is not so. Many of Alcoholics Anonymous were like that."* Including Bill and Bob. *"Everybody had given up on them. Defeat seemed certain, yet often such men had spectacular and powerful recoveries. There are exceptions. Some men have been so impaired by alcohol that they cannot stop. Sometimes there are cases where alcoholism is complicated by other disorders."* They call them co-occurring disorders today. *"A good doctor or psychiatrist can tell you whether these complications are serious. In any event, try to have your husband read this book. His reaction may be one of enthusiasm. If he is already committed to an institution but can convince you and the doctor that he means business, give him the chance to try our method, unless the doctor thinks his mental condition too abnormal or dangerous."* If they've locked him up in an asylum or he is in a rehab and he reads this book and he says, *"I want to try it."* Let him out of the asylum to try it. *"We make this recommendation with some confidence. For years we've been working with alcoholics committed to institutions."* *"Since this book was first published, AA has released thousands of alcoholics from asylums and hospitals of every kind. The majority have never returned. The power of God goes deep."*

*"You may have the reverse situation on your hands. Perhaps you have a husband who is at large but who should be committed. Some men cannot or will not get over alcoholism."* That's non-judgmental. They cannot or they will not get over alcoholism. Either they cannot or they will not. Those are the two reasons. *"When they become too dangerous, we think the kind thing is to lock them up but of course a good doctor should always be consulted. The wives and children of such men suffer horribly but not more than the men themselves. But sometimes you must start life anew. We know women who have done it. If such women adopt a spiritual way of life, their road will be smoother. If your husband is a drinker, you probably worry over what other people are thinking and you hate to meet your friends. You draw more and more into yourself and you think everyone is talking about conditions in your home. You avoid the subject of drinking even with your own parents. You do not know what to tell the children. When your husband is bad, you become a trembling recluse, wishing the telephone had never been invented. We find that most of this embarrassment is unnecessary. While you need not discuss your husband at length, you can quietly let your friends know the nature of his illness, but you must be on guard not to embarrass or harm your husband. When you have carefully explained to such people that he is a sick person, you will have created a new atmosphere. Barriers which have sprung up between you and your friends will disappear with the growth of sympathetic understanding. You will no longer be self-conscious or feel that you must apologize as though your husband were of weak character. He may be anything but that. Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially."*

That's a great attitude to have. We wish I could say that after seventy-five years of AA, society at large understands alcoholism the way it's being explained here, but they don't. There's been very slow growth. The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence was started by Marty Mann, who was one of the first women to stay sober in AA. Its basic objective was to eliminate the stigma of alcoholism. Unfortunately that task has only just begun after all these years. There is still so much stigma, so much discrimination occurring around alcoholism and alcoholics.

*"The same principle applies in dealing with the children. Unless they actually need protection from their father, it is best not to take sides in any argument he has with them while drinking. Use your energies to promote a better understanding all around. Then that terrible tension which grips the home of every problem drinker will be lessened. Frequently you have felt to tell your husband's employer and his friends that he was sick, when as a matter of fact, he was tight."* "Avoid answering these inquiries as much as you can. Whenever possible, let your husband explain. Your desire to protect your husband should not cause you to lie to people when they have a right to know where he is and what he is doing."

To cover for someone is enabling. *"Discuss this with him when he is sober and in good spirits. Ask him what you should do if he places you in such a position again, but be careful not to be resentful about the last time he did so. There is another paralyzing fear. You may be afraid your husband will lose his position. You are thinking of the disgrace and the hard times which will befall you and the children. This experience may come to you, or you may have had it several times. Should it happen again, regard it in a different light. Maybe it will prove a blessing. It may convince your husband he wants to stop drinking forever and now you know that he can stop if he wants to. Time after time this apparent calamity has been a boon to us for it opened up a path which led to the discovery of God."* Sometimes the worst thing can be the best thing because it motivates someone into recovery.

*"We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a spiritual plane. If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems too."* "We wives found that, like everybody else, we were afflicted with pride, self-pity, vanity, and all the things which go to make up the self-centered person and we were not above the selfishness or

dishonesty. As our husbands began to apply spiritual principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too." This was a family program of recovery back in the day. They wanted the wives and the children to take the steps. do the morning prayer and meditation, be part of the team that helps other alcoholics recover. That was the whole point of the early groups.

*"At first, some of us did not believe we needed this help. We thought on the whole we were pretty good women, capable of being nicer if our husbands stopped drinking. But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God. Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives. When we do that, we find it solves our problems too. The ensuing lack of fear, worry and hurt feelings is a wonderful thing. We urge you to try our program for nothing will be so helpful to your husband as the radically changed attitude toward him which God will show you how to have. Go along with your husband if you possibly can."* For anybody who wants to know what is the single most important thing you can possibly do to help your alcoholic family member, it says, we urge you to try our program. And the way to do that now is to go into the family groups or there's Families Anonymous, there's Alanson, there's a number of things. But don't just show up at the meetings, find a sponsor that will take you through the steps. That's the best thing you can do to help your alcoholic family member.

Being co-dependent is being attached to the behavior of others in an unhealthy way. The family members are usually suffering from a little bit of that. As with AA, many Al-Anon members today sometimes are not exposed to a decent recovery process. By going through the steps, we can become free of the bondage of self, being encumbered by all the feelings of pride, self-esteem, shame, guilt, remorse and anxiety

*"If you and your husband find a solution for the pressing problem of drink, you are of course going to be very happy, but all problems will not be solved at once. Seed has started to sprout in a new soil but growth has only begun. In spite of your newfound happiness, there will be ups and downs. Many of the old problems will be with you. This is as it should be. The faith and sincerity of both you and your husband will be put to the test. These workouts should be regarded as part of your education, for thus you will be learning to live. You will make mistakes but if you are in earnest, they will not drag you down. Instead you will capitalize them. A better way of life will emerge when they are overcome."*

So there are going to be hard times ahead. Everything isn't going to be great. But Bill sees that as an educational process. He sees it as growing pains. *"Some of the snags you will encounter are irritation, hurt feelings and resentments. Your husband will sometimes be unreasonable and you will want to criticize. Starting from a speck on the domestic horizon, great thunderclouds of dispute may gather. These family dissensions are very dangerous, especially to your husband. Often you must carry the burden of avoiding them or keeping them under control. Never forget that resentment is a deadly hazard to an alcoholic. We do not mean that you have to agree with your husband whenever there is an honest difference of opinion. Just be careful not to disagree in a resentful or critical spirit."* These are good principles for a sponsor to have.

*"You and your husband will find that you can dispose of serious problems easier than you can the trivial ones. Next time you and he have a heated discussion, no matter what the subject, it should be the privilege of either to smile and say, 'This is getting serious. I'm sorry I got disturbed. Let's talk about it later.' If your husband is trying to live on a spiritual basis, he will also be doing everything in his power to avoid disagreement or contention. Your husband knows he owes you more than sobriety. He wants to make good. Yet you must not expect too much. His ways of thinking and doing are the habits of years. Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords. Show him these things in yourself and they will be reflected back to you from him."* That's a great principle. There are steps, there are principles, and there are prayers in this book. Where we actually learn to apply them, we get really positive results in our life. Learn how to apply these principles, prayers, steps and you'll get all the promises.

*"Live and let live is the rule. If you both show a willingness to remedy your own defects, there will be little need to criticize each other. We women carry with us a picture of the ideal man, the sort of chap we would like our husbands to be. It is the most natural thing in the world once his liquor problem is solved to feel that he will now measure up to that cherished vision. The chances are that he will not, for, like yourself, he is just beginning his development. Be patient. Another feeling we are very likely to entertain is one of resentment that love and loyalty could not cure our husband of alcoholism. We do not like the thought that contents of a book or the work of another alcoholic could have accomplished in a few weeks that for which we struggled for years. At such moments we forget that alcoholism is an illness over which we could not possibly have had any power. Your husband will be the first to say it was your devotion and care which brought him to the point where he could have a spiritual experience. Without you, he would have gone to pieces long ago. When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings. After all, your family is reunited. Alcohol is no longer a problem and you and your husband are working together toward an undreamed-of future"*.

*"Still another difficulty is that you may become jealous of the attention that he bestows on other people, especially alcoholics. You have been starving for his companionship yet he spends long hours helping other men and their families. You feel he should now be yours. The fact is that he should work with other people to maintain his own sobriety. Sometimes he will be so interested that he becomes really neglectful. Your house is filled with strangers. You may not like some of them. He gets stirred up about their troubles but not at all about yours. It will do little good if you point that out and urge more attention for yourself. We find it a real mistake to dampen his enthusiasm for alcoholic work. You should join in his efforts as much as you possibly can. We suggest that you direct some of your thoughts to the wives of his new alcoholic friends. They need the counsel and love of a woman who has gone through what you have. It is probably true that you and your husband have been living too much alone, for drinking many times isolates the wife of an alcoholic. Therefore you probably need fresh interests and a great cause to live for as much as your husband. If you*

cooperate rather than complain, you will find that his excess enthusiasm will tone down. Both of you will awaken to a new sense of responsibility for others. You as well as your husband ought to think of what you can put into life instead of how much you can take out. Inevitably, your lives will be fuller for doing so. You will lose the old life to find one much better.”  
“Perhaps your husband will make a fair start on the new basis but just as things are going beautifully, he dismays you by coming home drunk. If you are satisfied he really wants to get over drinking, you need not be alarmed. Though it is infinitely better that he have no relapse at all, as has been true with many of our men, it is by no means a bad thing in some cases. Your husband will see at once that he must redouble his spiritual activities if he expects to survive.” This is what anyone should do who relapses. They need to redouble their spiritual activity.

“You need not remind him of his spiritual deficiency. He will know of it. Cheer him up and ask him if you can still be more helpful. The slightest sign of fear or intolerance may lessen your husband’s chance of recovery. In a weak moment, he may take your dislike of his high-stepping friends as one of those insanely trivial excuses to drink. We never, never try to arrange a man’s life so as to shield him from temptation. The slightest disposition on your part to guide his appointments or his affairs, though, he will not be tempted, will be noticed. Make him feel absolutely free to come and go as he likes. This is important. If he gets drunk, don’t blame yourself. God has either removed your husband’s liquor problem or he has not. If not, it had better be found out right away. Then you and your husband can get right down to fundamentals. If a repetition is to be prevented, place the problem along with everything else in God’s hands. We realize that we have been giving you much direction and advice. We may have seemed to lecture. If that is so, we are sorry, for we ourselves don’t always care for people who lecture us. But what we have related is based upon experience, some of it painful. We had to learn these things the hard way. That is why we are anxious that you understand and avoid these unnecessary difficulties. So to you out there who may soon be with us, we say good luck and God bless you.”

The Al-Anon family groups have not approved the big book as conference approved literature for their fellowship. There’s a lot of dispute in the family groups because of that. Some groups are big book groups and they’re mad because other groups don’t want them to use the big book. Where he takes the liberties of becoming a wife, that could annoy some of the family group members. But all those principles are very powerful and appropriate to use.

### The Family Afterwards 1

In modern addiction and alcoholism treatment, it’s become really apparent that any treatment process, needs to include the family.

Bill talks in this book about the entire family being to some extent ill. That’s what modern clinicians and modern treatment centers have discovered, when there’s addiction or when there’s alcoholism in a family, to some degree, the entire family needs to be treated for there to be wholesale recovery throughout the family.

In this chapter, The Family Afterwards, Bill talks about a number of things. He was very perceptive and was able to notice many important things in the small amount of time he was working with alcoholics and their families. This chapter has a lot of observations and a lot of principles that you can practice for family recovery. It’s a shame that it gets skipped over so much in certain workshops or it doesn’t get covered as much as some of the material in the other parts of the book.

More often than not, though, the family, because the family gets sick slowly over a period of time, don’t recognize how ill they really are. They don’t understand many of the behavior patterns that they’re following are really unhealthy. It’s a real challenge for someone to alert the rest of the family that they’re not doing things right. What will happen is, everybody will be pointing the finger in the direction of the alcoholic and when somebody stops and says, “Well, wait a minute. You’ve got some issues here yourself,” there’s a lot of resistance. So often that they just can’t believe it. “I’m here for him” or “I brought you guys over to talk about him, not me...” When you want to see a family get healthy, each specific member of that family needs to take a close look at what’s going on in their life and take responsibility for that to get better.

“Our womenfolk have suggested certain attitudes a wife might take with a husband who is recovering. Perhaps they created the impression that he is to be wrapped in cotton wool and placed on a pedestal. Successful readjustment means the opposite. All members of the family should meet upon the common ground of tolerance, understanding and love.”

Sometimes these principles are very, very difficult to be able to get behind. I know it was a long while before our common ground was tolerance, understanding and love. More often than not it was anger, resentment and judgment.

“This involves a process of deflation. The alcoholic, his wife, his children, his in-laws, each one is likely to have fixed ideas about the family’s attitude towards himself or herself. Each is interested in having his or her wishes respected. We find the more one member of the family demands that the others concede to him, the more resentful they become. This makes for discord and unhappiness.” Earlier in the other chapters it talked about the concept that we have to stop playing God. We have to stop being the actor trying to run the whole show, trying to direct the play when we’re not the director. We’re just an actor in the play, and Bill is bringing that philosophy into the family. If you look at any family that could be considered dysfunctional you’re going to see that there’s warring factions. There’s people maneuvering for position and manipulating other people in different ways. And all of that really leads to an unhealthy lifestyle and certainly unhappiness all around. Sometimes we really thought we were the smartest one. We thought we had a unique perspective on how life should be lived, how things should be thought about, and how people should believe.

“This makes for discord and unhappiness. And why? Is it not because each wants to play the lead? Is each not trying to arrange the family show to his liking? Is he not unconsciously trying to see what he can take from the family life rather than give?” Here’s a great concept. “Cessation of drinking is but the first step away from a highly strained abnormal

*condition.*” Quitting drinking is but the first step away from a highly strained, abnormal condition. There are still so many people out there that think sobriety alone is the goal of this whole thing. Sobriety is certainly important, but recovery is the goal, because the difference between sobriety and recovery is like the difference between night and day.

*“A doctor said to us years of living with an alcoholic is sure to make any wife or child neurotic. The entire is to some extent ill.”* And that’s certainly true today. They’re finding out that families need so much work when a family member is getting treated. Really, the whole family should be treated to some extent also. Bill knew it from the beginning.

*“Let families realize as they start their journey that all will not be fair weather. Each in his turn may be footsore and may straggle. There will be alluring shortcuts and by-paths down which they may wander and lose their way. Suppose we tell you some of the obstacles the family will meet. Suppose we tell you how they may be avoided, even converted to good use for others. The family of an alcoholic longs for the return of happiness and security. They remember when Father as romantic, thoughtful and successful. Today’s life is measured against that of other years and when it falls short, the family may be unhappy. Family confidence in Dad is rising high. The good old days will soon be back, they think. Sometimes they demand that Dad bring them back instantly. God, they believe, almost owes this recompense on a long overdue account, but the head of the house has spent years pulling down the structures of business, romance, friendship and health. These things are now ruined or damaged. It will take time to clear away the wreck. The old buildings will eventually be replaced by finer ones. The new structures will take years to complete. Father knows he’s to blame. It may take him many seasons of hard work to be restored financially but he should not be reproached. Perhaps he will never have much money again, but the wise family will admire him for what he is trying to be rather than for what he is trying to get.”* That’s a spiritual concept, the more recovered you become, the less interested in what you can get and the more interested you are in what you can be.

*“Don’t criticize the alcoholic.”* We think that Bill might have had a bit of an agenda with this statement, but we also think it’s not going to help to reproach the alcoholic. The chances of you being an alcoholic, getting sober and then finding a really healthy recovery are not in the majority. If you look at five to ten percent of the population being alcoholic and the small amount that are in recovery, you have to ask yourself why only ten or fifteen percent of the alcoholics find their way to recovery. So sometimes it’s a fine line. It’s a dangerous road and we think it is wise to try not to do things that might sabotage someone’s opportunity to get sober. One thing we see over and over is the wife or husband is mad about them going to meetings. Why are you going out every night? Sometimes they are badgered to the point where they couldn’t go out to these meetings any more. They end up relapsing and losing everything. Would it have been wiser looking at this like a medical condition, it’s an illness; this person needs to have his treatment, the recovery process? But there’s a lot of misunderstanding in family members. They really think that the alcoholic did this on purpose. It may be wise to caution them away from being, from attacking the alcoholic while they’re trying to get sober.

*“Now and then the family will be plagued by specters from the past, for the drinking career of most every alcoholic has been marked by escapades, funny and humiliating, shameful or tragic. The first impulse would be to bury these skeletons in a dark closet and padlock the door. The family may be possessed by the idea that future happiness can be based only upon forgetfulness of the past. We think that such a view is self-centered and in direct conflict with the new way of living.”* The new way of living wants you to take responsibility for those skeletons in your closet so that you can truly remove them from the house and they won’t be popping up any more.

*“Henry Ford once made a wise remark to the effect that experience is the thing of supreme value in life. That is true only if one is willing to turn the past to good account. We grow by our willingness to face and correct errors and convert them into assets. The alcoholic’s past thus becomes the principle asset of the family and frequently it is the only one.”*

Experience is the supreme thing of value in life and certainly in support groups. There will be people in support groups who will share opinions, and there will be people in support groups who share experience. Let’s look at one example. Let’s say somebody raises their hand in a twelve step meeting and says, “I haven’t done the step that we’re talking about tonight formally but I’m going to share a little bit about it for the next five minutes.” What they’re doing is they’re sharing an opinion.

Now somebody that raises their hand and says, “I’ve just done a number of these amends” or “I’ve just taken this step and I want to tell you what’s going on in my life...”, they’re going to be sharing their experience. So for a member of a twelve step fellowship, one of the things you need to do is discern the difference between when someone is sharing their opinion. Sometimes they share slogans that they’ve heard for years and really don’t know how to apply. When actual experience is being shared it can save lives and it’s the opinions that can cost lives. The concept of actually taking your experience, even if it’s a very bad one, when you were out there drinking and turning it into a principle asset in your life is an amazing one. Sometimes we are able to share those things with someone who’s struggling or is somewhere around that same mile marker on the road to recovery. We share the experience of those tough times, what we did, what happened because we did a certain thing and how we moved forward. Now it really is an asset that is incredibly beneficial to other people when you learn how to use it right.

Somewhere along the line in many of the twelve step fellowships, it became easier to just throw out little wisdom sayings or little clichés. It became easier than actually doing the work and gaining some experience. The newcomer is the lifeblood of the twelve step fellowship, but the experienced member is the heart. Without an experienced member, you’re just going to have newcomers bouncing around like pin-balls, never getting anywhere. Without someone experienced in the steps there is no direction for the newcomer.

Some of these sayings are inappropriate. Let’s look at one. Stick with the winners. Now, we believe that you should be sticking with the winners before you get through the steps, but if you stick with the winners after you’ve gone through the

steps, you're just going to be talking recovery with recovered people. What we're supposed to be doing is sticking with the losers. We're supposed to be helping the people that are struggling and having a hard time. We're supposed to be in the trenches with them, trying to offer them a simple kit of spiritual tools so that they can find recovery. Another thing about slogans is they leave so much latitude in interpretation that if you say something like "easy does it" to somebody, they may think, "Well, easy does it...I'm not going to go to too many meetings and I'm going to take my time with the steps. Or, easy does it means, I'm going to take it easy on the commitments and the service work in my life." And if you do this, easy will have killed you, is what easy did.

Bill Wilson put some slogans in this book, first things first, live and let live, and easy does it, but for us to understand those in context, we really have to place ourselves back in the late 30s groups where they came from. First things first, means place God in his kingdom first and everything else will come to you. But to really understand what they're saying, you have to understand it in context and not make up your own context.

*"This painful task may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not, and when the occasion requires, each member of it should be only too willing to bring the former mistakes, no matter how grievous, out of their hiding places. Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worthwhile to us now. Cling to the thought that in God's hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have, the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them."* Throughout the whole narrative of this book, it's preparing us as recovered alcoholics to help others recover. In this paragraph it's saying families who have been relieved, families who have learned this way of life, and families who now have a recovered family member, need to go out and help other families. These early members went through the steps in a very short period of time, no more than several weeks.

They went through the steps, and they've already made direct amends to the best ability they had at the time to the family. It was very important, especially for Doctor Bob, to bring the family into the meetings. The families were invited into the meetings, into the homes. They were all open meetings. The alcoholics were the ones that talked but the family members were invited to learn how to do the prayer, meditation and learn the spiritual principles so that they could apply it in their life. So you have to take it in context. Today, that's really not what happens. You send Father off to go to those twelve steps meetings and you stay home to watch TV. It's really not the way it used to be any more. So if you look at it in context, they had a better chance of being helpful in the old days because they were drawn *more fully into the whole process.*

*"It is possible to dig up past mistakes so that they become a blight, a veritable plague. For example, we know of situations in which the alcoholic or his wife have had love affairs. In the first flush of spiritual experience, they forgive each other and drew closer together. The miracle of reconciliation was at hand. Then at one provocation or another, the grieved one would unearth the old affair and angrily cast its ashes about. A few of us have had these growing pains and they hurt a great deal. Husbands and wives have sometimes been obliged to separate for a time until new perspective, new victory over hurt pride can be re-won. In most cases, the alcoholic survived this ordeal without relapse, but not always. So we think that unless some good and useful purpose could be served, past occurrences should not be discussed."* One person we knew had a seven-day rule in the family. After seven days, if there was something that somebody was upset about or someone did something wrong, it was not to be brought up. After seven days, if you haven't dealt with it somehow, if amends haven't been made, if you haven't gotten current with them about it, it was to be left alone. Sometimes, bringing these things up serves no good purpose. We have experience with family members who would bring things up that we did fifteen years ago. That's really not helpful in today's current state of affairs. It really doesn't have any relevance on who we are today or how we are operating today; all it does is add fuel to a fire.

Men have processing errors and women have processing errors in their thinking patterns that could be a little bit different than one another, gender specific. We each have our issues and faults. The fact of the matter is, if you're dealing with an alcoholic, you're dealing with an ill person. Until they've got some serious recovery under their belt and they're standing on some solid footing, you're not really helping by engaging in a heated argument. So we should all try to find a way around that. Bill Wilson talked about all of this stuff as growing pains. It's not right, wrong, or indifferent. What we want is our momentum is forward moving rather than backward.

*"We families of Alcoholics Anonymous keep few skeletons in the closet. Everyone knows about the other alcoholics' troubles. This is a condition in which an ordinary life would produce untold grief. There might be scandalous gossip, laughter at the expense of other people and the tendency to take advantage of intimate information. Among us these are rare occurrences. We do talk about each other a great deal but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance. Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve. We find it better when possible to stick to our own stories. A man may criticize or laugh at himself and will affect others favorably, but criticism or ridicule coming from another often produces the contrary effect. Members of a family should watch such matters carefully, for one careless, inconsiderate remark has been known to raise the very devil. We alcoholics are sensitive people. It takes some of us a long time to outgrow that serious handicap*

More and more in modern treatment, they're recognizing that very few people have only one addiction and many people will switch addictions. They'll get sober and then they'll gamble. They'll curb their gambling and then they'll be into pornography on the web or they'll be shopaholics or they'll have food problems. They're seeing the addictive personality is manifest even when someone gets sober or someone gets clean from drugs.

*"Many alcoholics are enthusiasts. They run to extremes. At the beginning of recovery, a man will take as a rule one of*

two directions. He may either plunge into a frantic attempt to get on his feet in business or he may be so enthralled with his new life that he thinks or talks of little else.” Sometimes we see people who who quits their job just to do AA full time. And that again, that’s another healthy dependence.

It’s an unhealthy dependence to be a workaholic. It’s an unhealthy dependence to be a recovery-aholic. There has to be some kind of balance.

*“In either case, certain family problems will arise. With these, we have had experience galore. We think it dangerous if he rushes headlong at his economic problem. The family will be affected also, pleasantly at first, as they feel their money troubles are about to be solved, but then not so pleasantly as they find themselves neglected. Dad may be tired at night and preoccupied by day. He may take small interest in the children and may show irritation when reproved for his delinquencies. If not irritable, he may seem dull and boring, not gay and affectionate, as the family would like him to be. Mother may complain of inattention. They are all disappointed and often let him feel it. Beginning with such complaints, a barrier arises. He is straining every nerve to make up for lost time. He is striving for fortune and reputation and feels he is doing very well. Sometimes Mother and children don’t think so, having been neglected and misused in the past, they think Father owes them more than they are getting. They want him to make a fuss over them. They expect him to give the nice things they used to have before he drank so much and to show his contrition for what they suffered. But Dad doesn’t give freely of himself. Resentment grows. He becomes still less communicative. Sometimes he explodes over a trifle. The family is mystified. They criticize, pointing out how he is falling down on his spiritual program. This sort of thing can be avoided. Both Father and the family are mistaken, though each side may have some justification. It is of little use to argue and only makes the impasse worse. The family must realize that Dad, though marvelously improved, is still convalescing. They should be thankful he is sober and able to be of this world once more. Let them praise his progress. Let them remember that his drinking wrought all kinds of damage that may take long to repair. If they sense these things, they will not take so seriously his periods of crankiness, depression, or apathy, which will disappear when there is tolerance, love and spiritual understanding.”*

He’s warning the family that what you give out, you will get back. If you give out positive acceptance of the father, you’re probably going to get back positive reaction. And that’s a spiritual principle that’s good at all times, but especially in the tricky times, in the alcoholic’s first year or two back in the family.

*“The head of the house ought to remember that he is mainly to blame for what befell his home. He can scarcely square the account in his lifetime but he must see the danger in over-concentration on financial success. Although financial recovery is on the way for many of us, we found that we could not place money first. For us, material well-being always followed spiritual progress. It never preceded it.”* We have seen a lot of people fail because they put so much attention into work. They had to have that big job where they were gone from six in the morning until eight or nine o’clock at night and they just did not have time for support groups. “I’m sorry. I’ll do a little bit on the weekend, if I have time.” And by placing work at a higher level of importance than recovery, they sabotaged both. In other words, the great lie every alcoholic tells themselves is, “I’ve got this now. I’m okay. Thanks for the information.

“Now that I know I need to not drink, I’m going to get back about my life.” Sometimes they have to learn by falling. Sometimes they learn by other people’s experience and by listening to a sponsor or a spiritual advisor, but sometimes they have to fall. We have seen many people fall that put way more importance on their job than they did on meetings, steps and service. And sometimes learn the hard way.

You can’t let what recovery gives you, the things that recovery gives you take you away from recovery.

There’s a balance and a good sponsor or a good spiritual advisor, given the spiritual consent to take the person to task, is going to help this person understand priorities. A lot of times what our sponsor’s job is pointing us back toward meetings, steps and service. Work is something you do after meetings, steps and service. Meetings, steps and service are not something you do after work. It’s a shift in perspective but sometimes it’s one that will save your life.

*“Since the home has suffered more than anything else, it is well that he exert himself there. He is not likely to get far in any direction if he fails to show unselfishness and love under his own roof. We know there are difficult wives and families. The man who is getting over alcoholism must remember he did much to make them so. As each member of a resentful family begins to see his shortcomings and admits them to others, he lays the basis for a helpful discussion. These family talks will be constructive if they can be carried on without heated argument, self-pity, self-justification or resentful criticism.”* “Little by little Mother and children will see they ask too much and Father will see he gives too little. Giving rather than getting will become the guiding principle.” That has to be the guiding principle of this book. So often we see people heading toward their support groups to fill up like it’s a spiritual gas station, or they’ll come out of a meeting complaining that they didn’t get anything out of that meeting. Those people are under the mistaken idea that they’re going there to get. Those meetings are certainly a place where newcomers can get, but if you’ve been around awhile, they’re supposed to be a place where you can go to give. Giving rather than getting should be your guiding principle when going off to a support group meeting.

*“Assume on the other hand that Father has at the outset a stirring spiritual experience. Overnight, as it were, he is a different man. He becomes a religious enthusiast. He is unable to focus on anything else. As soon as his sobriety begins to be taken as a matter of course, the family may look at their strange new dad with apprehension and then with irritation. There is talk about spiritual matters morning, noon and night. He may demand that the family find God in a hurry or exhibit amazing indifference to them and say that he is above worldly consideration. He may tell Mother who has been religious all her life that she doesn’t know what it’s all about and that she better get his brand of spirituality while there is yet time. When Father takes this tack, the family may react unfavorably. They may be jealous of a God who has*

stolen Dad's affection. While grateful that he drinks no more, they may not like the idea that God has accomplished a miracle where they failed. They often forget Father was beyond human aid. They may not see why their love and devotion did not straighten him out. Dad is not so spiritual after all, they say. If he means to right his past wrongs, why all this concern for everyone in the world but his family? What about his talk that God will take care of them? They suspect Father is a bit balmy. He is not so unbalanced as they might think. Many of us have experienced Dad's elation. We have indulged in spiritual intoxication. Like a gaunt prospector, belt drawn in over the last ounce of food, our pick struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. Father feels he has struck something better than gold. For a time, he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless load, which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product." That is a great descriptive of what we do on the spiritual plane in the recovery process.

The dividends are spiritual dividends and emotional dividends. "If the family cooperates, Dad will soon see that he is suffering from a distortion of values. He will perceive that his spiritual growth is lopsided. That for an average man like himself, a spiritual life which does not include his family obligations may not be so perfect after all. If the family will appreciate that Dad's current behavior is but a phase of his development all will be well. In the midst of an understanding and sympathetic family, these vagaries of Dad's spiritual infancy will quickly disappear. The opposite may happen should the family condemn and criticize. Dad may feel that for years his drinking has placed him on the wrong side of every argument, but that now he has become a superior person with God on his side. If the family persists in criticism, this fallacy may take a still greater hold on Father. Instead of treating the family as he should, he may retreat further into himself and feel he has spiritual justification for doing so."

"Though the family does not fully agree with Dad's spiritual activities, they should let him have his head. Even if he displays a certain amount of neglect and irresponsibility towards the family, it is well to let him go as far as he likes in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to ensure his sobriety than anything else." Let's look at this sentence, helping other alcoholics, going out and finding a prospect, then turning him into a protégé and taking him through the steps. That's finding and helping another alcoholic in the context of this book. It says, "during those first days of convalescence..." so doesn't that mean that almost from the get-go, you can go out and start to help other alcoholics? What about the wisdom teaching that's so current in twelve step fellowships that you need a year before you can sponsor?: Does that go at odds with what this book is saying?

There has to be people who have experience really have to stand up. That's one of the things that happened in AA from, say, 1950 on was newcomers were starting to overtake the old-timers. All of a sudden, there were way more newcomers than there were old-timers and people abdicated their responsibility. Their responsibility was grabbing these people and taking them through the steps, and for one reason or another, the members in many different areas in Alcoholics Anonymous did not do that. And what happened was the inmates started to run the asylum.

One of the principles of the fellowship is when somebody reaches out for AA, the hand of AA must always be there. That's a statement of unity and that's absolutely true, but that does not mean that you need to take on a guy if it's inappropriate or they are unwilling to work with you. If you have just gone there to fill up and you're not interested in reaching out your hand, then you don't understand that you need to continue to mine this material for a lifetime and give away the entire product to get the dividends. The dividends come from helping other people. They don't come from sitting in a chair night after night after night. You don't know that unless you're experienced with the recovery process. You don't know what's available. There's more available than just gaining sobriety by sitting in a chair at a meeting. We should not just be trying to remember on a daily basis not to drink when in fact, we are powerless.

"During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to ensure his sobriety than anything else. Though some of his manifestations are alarming and disagreeable, we think Dad will be on firmer foundation than the man who is placing business or professional success ahead of spiritual development." So, spiritual development needs to be placed ahead of business or professional success and it's basically saying that yes you have to take on family responsibilities, but if you're not taking the spiritual development seriously as well as the family responsibilities, you're going to disappoint both. You're going to fail at both. So rather than fail at both, the primary purpose is to stay sober, recover and help others recover and then you can fit everything else in after that.

"He will be less likely to drink again and everything else is preferable to that. Those of us who have spent much time in the world of spiritual make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. This dream world has been replaced by a great sense of purpose, accompanied by a growing consciousness of the power of God in our lives. We have come to believe that He would like us to keep our heads in the clouds with Him, but that our feet ought to be firmly planted on earth. That is where our fellow travelers are and that is where our work must be done. These are the realities for us. We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness

There are people, who go to India and study with the Dalai Lama, learn to pray and meditate and they go off into silent retreats for two or three years at a time. As alcoholics, we can't go that far. We need to be where we can help other people. Yes, the spiritual life is very attractive and some people go really deeply into it but if we go too deeply into we may not be at a place where we can be helpful to our fellow suffering alcoholics or addicts. We're doing a huge disservice, not only to mankind, God and His children, but we're doing a disservice to ourselves too.

So often the last four chapters of the book go unnoticed in big book workshops and there's such a wealth of information, attitudes, outlooks, instructions, spiritual principles and practices that you can transmit into a positive experience in your life or the lives of others that it's really a shame that it gets overlooked.

The chapter *The Family Afterward* is very profound. Currently in this day and age, people are just coming to terms with how much the family has to be involved in one's recovery. For many, many years, people thought that the alcoholic needed to go off, get treatment, come back and be a better man. As professionals in addiction treatment get more and more experience, they understand that the family has become ill along with the alcoholic.

Bill was so far-seeing, so perceptive, he saw these things in the family and he understood that they needed to be addressed. You will now find interventionists and treatment centers that will not accept you as a client unless your family is willing to participate in the treatment process. That's how much importance people are putting on family involvement. *"One more suggestion, whether the family has spiritual convictions or not, they may do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live. They can hardly fail to approve these simple principles, though the head of the household still fails somewhat in practicing them. Nothing will help the man who is off on a spiritual tangent so much as the wife who adopts the same spiritual program, making better practical use of it."* If you really want to help the alcoholic in your family, this book is saying that the best thing you can do is start to work a spiritual program yourself. Start to practice these steps. Engage in a recovery fellowship, maybe a family group for Families Anonymous or Al-Anon. A lot of times you're going to have to take that on faith because you're not going to understand why you have to do all this work yourself when he is the one who is sick. You need to take it on faith that the family has become ill, and when one person in the family really starts to recover, it sets in motion certain vibrations throughout the family that make it conducive to other people doing so as well. And again, you're going to get a lot of resistance from the families usually about "I'm not the one that's the problem. I've been picking up the pieces of this guy's life..." or "This woman's troubles for so long...don't be looking at me." The fact of the matter is you have most likely become ill from prolonged exposure to the alcoholic especially if you've been living with them.

*"There will be other profound changes in the household. Liquor incapacitated Father for so many years that Mother became head of the house. She met these responsibilities gallantly. By force of circumstances she was often obliged to treat Father as a sick or wayward child. Even when he wanted to assert himself, he could not for his drinking placed him constantly in the wrong. Mother made all the plans and gave all the directions. When sober, Father usually obeyed. Thus, Mother, through not fault of her own, became accustomed to wearing the family trousers. Father, coming suddenly to life again, often begins to assert himself. This means trouble unless the family watches for these tendencies in each other and comes to a friendly agreement about them."*

We have seen this happen. There was a guy we were working with back in the 90s. What happened was he came out of his blackout, he started to recover and he started to assert himself. He started to ask questions like, "Can I see the checkbook?" "What's the status of our investments?" Things the wife had taken care of for many, many years and it exploded. She basically said, "Look, I've been doing this for the last twenty years. All of a sudden, you're going to come stepping in, saying you want to take over our life, over my dead body. Go back down to the basement where you belong and where you've been for the last twenty years." These kinds of things can definitely happen. We like the instruction to come to friendly agreement. Talk about it, if you're in treatment, you're starting to recover and you want more involvement in the family, you need to have a talk with the family about that.

You can't just assert yourself. You have been looked on like a very ill failure for years. All of a sudden, you're going to have an attitude like you know better than all these other people? There really needs to be a transitional period. Also you could be a little bit crazy in early sobriety. You're waking up brain cells that haven't been turned on in years. Just try to do no harm. Try to keep things cool. Try not to have arguments start. Try to stay out of controversy and conflict as best you can, because you really are convalescing.

*"Drinking isolates most homes from the outside world. Father may have laid aside for years of all normal activity...clubs, civic duty, sports." When you're drinking a quart of whiskey every day you don't have a lot of time for PTA meetings. "When he renews interest in such things, a feeling of jealousy may arise. The family may feel they hold a mortgage on Dad so big that no equity may be left for outsiders. Instead of developing new channels of activity for themselves, Mother and children demand that he stay home and make up the deficiency."*

There is a huge amount of amends that need to take place within the family unit by the alcoholic or the addict who is practicing recovery principles. But that does not mean that if your family says, "You're staying here every night," that you should do so. If you don't become consistent at fellowship meetings, work the steps with a sponsor, and find service commitments outside of your house, you're probably going to relapse. So the choice needs to be to find a certain type of balance with your recovery process and your family or else you're going to lose both. We need to be as compassionate as possible with our family but that does not mean acquiescing to being at home all the time and having our schedule tied up completely with family activities. Not if we're recovering from alcoholism. The treatment for alcoholism is action and if we don't have time to engage in that action, we're not treating our alcoholism. If we're not treating our alcoholism, God can't do God's job and what happens is a relapse, so there has to be sensible balance...

But if we're going to three meetings a day every single day for the last six months and our family is suffering, part of our recovery is learning how to be productive members of our family as well.

There was this old-timer in one of the fellowship meetings we used to go to. Everybody looked up to this guy because he gave great share. He sat there with a cigar, this was back when there was still smoker meetings, going, "Kid, you got to take the cotton out of your ears and put it in your mouth." Everybody loved this guy because he just gave great one-

liners. But one-liners are not an effective defense against alcoholism, but everybody loved this guy because he was fun to listen to. People looked up to him as an icon in this particular support group. One day he criticized somebody in the meeting and the guy went right back after him saying, "How about your family life? I see you at a meeting every single night for the last twenty years. Have you ever taken your wife out to the movies?" The guy was right. You can't hide out in the meetings where it's all comfy cozy. The whole point of recovery is being able to get back out there in the world, to do the things you need to do, where you need to do them and with whom you need to do them with.

Do we need meetings? Yes. Do we need to be spending time on service commitments? Yes, but not one hundred percent of the time. That would not be practicing a balanced program.

*"At the very beginning the couple will have to frankly face that each will have to yield here and there if the family is going to play an effective part in the new life. Father will necessarily spend much time with other alcoholics, but this activity should be balanced."* "New acquaintances who know nothing of alcoholism might be made and thoughtful consideration given to their needs. *The problems of the community might engage attention. Though the family has no religious connections, they may wish to make contact with or take membership in a religious body. Alcoholics who have derided religious people will be helped by such contact. Being possessed of a spiritual experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people, though he may differ with them on many matters. If he does not argue with them about religion, he will make new friends and is sure to find new avenues of usefulness and pleasure. He and his family can be a bright spot in such congregations. He may bring new hope and new courage to many a priest, minister or rabbi who gives his all to minister to our troubled world."*

You may make a great church member because of your spiritual experience, your spiritual awakening, and the places you've been and where God is taking you now.

*"We intend the foregoing as a helpful suggestion only. So far as we are concerned, there is nothing obligatory about it. As non-denominational people, we cannot make up others' minds for them. Each individual should consult his own conscience."* Many people end up in church as really good members. Many people end up studying spiritual material; they find a great comfort in it. Many psychiatrists and many spiritual masters always talk about the God-shaped hole inside us. Our soul will not be at rest until it rests within God's hands. Until we find wholeness in spiritual practice, we're not going to be whole. And many people are going to move into a religious practice. They're going to move into a spiritual practice and this book basically suggests that it's a good idea. But it also says that to be an Alcoholics Anonymous member or to work these steps, you don't necessarily have to. You're probably going to be driven to it, be led to it.

*"We have been speaking to you of serious, sometimes tragic, things. We have been dealing with alcohol in its worst aspect but we aren't a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn't want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life."* Those are some great promises. Those are some great statements of hope. People that get through these steps absolutely insist on enjoying life.

There's a lot of joy and fun in their existence. Every once in a while if you find a group where it's just a complaint session, one person complaining about the misery of their life after the other, that's not what we're supposed to be aiming at. If the newcomer is really an important part of your support group's mission, you're under an obligation to be providing an atmosphere where they see joy, where they see fun and where they see people enjoying life. And if you have no joy, or you're not really enjoying your life, you're doing it wrong. There is a huge problem with your spiritual condition and you need to go back and do the steps because you obviously haven't done them. Lots of people haven't been taught what really is going on in this book.

What we sometimes see is people who went to step meetings, consistently, really thought that they had worked the steps because they went to a lot of step meetings. Nothing is further from the truth. What many of us have found at step meetings is, there are a lot of people that talk about the steps, share about the steps, think about the steps, philosophize about the steps, give their opinion about the steps but have never really done them. The Twelve and Twelve, although it's a great book, was very, damaging to the course of Alcoholics Anonymous when it was printed because it took the focus off the book Alcoholics Anonymous. All of a sudden step meetings popped up everywhere.

Instead of going to big book meetings, big book beginner meetings or speaker meetings where someone who had some real experience was sharing, they started to go to step meetings thinking that that was working their program. That's been one of the most damaging things to Alcoholics Anonymous in the last forty years.

*"We try not to indulge in cynicism in the state of the nation, nor do we carry the world's troubles on our shoulders. When we see a man sinking into the mire that is alcoholism, we give him first aid and place what we have at his disposal."* And first aid is trying to engage him in the steps, getting him to the decision, placing what we have at his disposal, showing him how we have worked through the steps and encouraging them and helping them to do so as well.

*"For his sake, we do recount and almost relive the horrors of our past. But those of us who have tried to shoulder the entire burden of others find we are soon overwhelmed by them."* Sometimes we did not qualify the alcoholic thoroughly enough, didn't give them instructions and hold them accountable. Sometimes we let them slide and we are not holding them accountable to doing the work.

Sometimes people are just pillaging the fellowship meetings for whatever they can get. These are people we shouldn't be working with. Sometimes their motivation is not to have a spiritual experience and recover from alcoholism. Their motivation is to get out of the jackpot. If you really look closely at the chapter Working with Others and if you follow those principles as guiding, you're not going to get into that kind of trouble. You'll qualify somebody right out the door who is not serious. We're not on a membership drive; we want to work with the people who are willing to do these things. We can't

help the people that are not willing. Yes, we can encourage them to not drink but we can't offer them recovery if they're not willing to go through these steps.

*"We think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we burst into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past" "But why shouldn't we laugh? We have recovered. And have been given the power to help others."* Most of us take working with others seriously. We take a lot of things in our life seriously but we don't take ourselves seriously. If we can't find some humor sometimes in things, where is the joy? Where are we going to find the joy in life? There has to be some fun in all of this or it would be much more of a chore than it is.

One of the things that's really tragic is for someone to go up to an alcoholic who's brand new and say, "Kid, you just got to put the plug in the jug. You just got to not drink one day at a time." A lot of times, the newcomer is saying, "No, no, no. Listen, alcohol did something for me. It's tearing my life up but it takes away the terror. It allows me to leave the house. If you're going to tell me to just stop drinking, what else are you going to give me? What else is there here? You can't just tell me not to drink. I've tried that. You can't just tell me to put the plug in the jug. I've tried that. The terror comes back. I'm not able to function. I'm depressed. I'm anxious. I'm remorseful. I can't stand myself. Isn't there something else here? If all you've got for me is not drinking, you can have it."

We have to be better at painting the picture of recovery. We can't just put twelve promises up on the wall and leave it at that. We need to do a better job of showing that there is joy in life, showing that there is recovery, showing that your quality of life is going to get better every single year you're with us. So stay with us. Enough people have already told us to quit drinking.

We knew the first drink gets you drunk, we already knew that we can't get drunk if I don't take the first drink. There question is, how do you not take the first drink? How do you do that because every time I make a decision to do that, it doesn't work so I must be different than you. This place must not be what I need. This place isn't going to work for me. That's what a lot of newcomers are going to think if you just tell them to put the plug in the jug. We need to do a better job at explaining what this thing is all about.

*"Everyone knows that those in bad health and those who seldom pray do not laugh much. So let each family play together or separately as much as their circumstances warrant. We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous and free. We cannot subscribe to the belief that this life is a veil of tears though once it was just that for many of us, but it is clear that we made our misery."* This is about the fifth time that this book says all of our problems are of our own making. We're responsible for all of it. The fact of the matter is, everyone has to come to terms in their own way with spiritual beliefs. Many of us chose to ignore those spiritual principles and act selfishly and self-centered. That's what brought on our misery.

*"Avoid then the deliberate manufacture of misery, but if trouble comes, cheerfully capitalize it as an opportunity to demonstrate His omnipotence."* That's a great statement. If trouble comes to you, getting through it is going to demonstrate that the power of God is working through you. There are people that are unconvinced that this path will help them and there are people that are constitutionally incapable. They suffer from real severe mental difficulties but what we get tired of is the people that come up and say, "You know, I'm doing it again. I'm doing it again. I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do."

Yes, you do know what to do. You know that these steps work. You know that there needs to be a certain participation for the removal of your character defects and you're not participating. You're not working the steps. You're not inventorying on a constant basis. You're not admitting it to your fellows. You're not making amends for the harms that you continue to cause. Don't tell me you don't know what to do. The first meeting you ever go to, they read How it Works. Don't tell me you don't know what to do. Why don't you just say, "I'm lazy, I'm obstinate and I refuse to take the castor oil because I don't like the taste and I'm going to suffer the consequences. It's my responsibility." Say something like that. That's closer to the truth than "I don't know what to do."

*"Now about health... a body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight. Nor do twisted thinking and depression vanish in a twinkling."* Bill suffered from depression. He would definitely be diagnosed with clinical depression if they had such things back in the 50s. There were many days when Bill Wilson himself could not get out of bed. He would pull the covers over his head and he would not leave his bedroom. A lot of the writing of the twelve and twelve took place during those periods of depression. He would have Lois bring him a pad and pencil and he'd do his writing in bed. He suffered from unbelievably powerful depression.

He started to get involved with LSD. He started to get involved with vitamin B therapy to try to help some of this depression. Finally some people out in Akron said, "Bill, why don't you go through the steps again? When was the last time you went through the steps?" And he was able to practice some of the principles and get out of his depression. A lot of people who have been around, been sober for years, their life is just completely in the toilet, go through the work again because that they know that there's power in this work. People who went through the work at twenty years, thirty years, whose lives started to take off at that point. The body can take a lot longer than the mind or the spirit to recover.

*"We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is the most powerful health restorative."* *"We who have recovered from serious drinking are miracles of mental health, but we have seen remarkable transformations in our bodies. Hardly one of our crowd now shows any mark of dissipation. But this does not mean that we disregard human health measures. God has abundantly supplied this world with fine doctors, psychologists and practitioners of various kinds. Do not hesitate to take your health problems to such persons. Most of them give freely of themselves that their fellows enjoy sound minds and bodies. Try to remember that though God has wrought miracles among us, we should never belittle a good doctor or*

*psychiatrist. Their services are often indispensable in treating a newcomer and following his case afterward."*

With the changes in mental health today, the pharmaceutical companies are really pushing a lot of different medications and we still believe that there are good doctors and good psychiatrists. But if you are a newcomer, you get sober and you go to a doctor or psychiatrist prior to going through the steps, you are going to be presenting with symptoms that mimic depression, anxiety, even sociopathic behavior. You're going to present with a myriad of psychiatric issues that may just be untreated alcoholism. It may just be that your spiritual condition is so bad that you look like you're manic-depressive. You could come off with a hundred diagnoses from a hundred different doctors. If you are going to see a doctor or psychiatrist, we highly recommend going to one with an ASAM approval – American Society of Addiction Medicine. We highly recommend going to somebody who specializes in the treatment of addictions. Because a doctor or a psychiatrist treats the symptoms that present and they're not going to know the difference between actual psychological problems and temporary psychological problems that are stemming from your alcoholism. Many of us think it's best to see what gets treated spiritually, and if problems still arise, let's go see the professionals. If you go through treatment, a lot of professionals will be right there with you from the very beginning. And a lot of them understand the treatment of addictions and understand that abstinence from all drugs is preferable to maintenance on some drugs, and you're going to be in good hands. But you can't just go to your family doctor five minutes after you got sober because what's going to happen is they're going to prescribe drugs to you that you may or may not need. They will be prescribing appropriately related to the symptoms but alcoholics and addicts may react to this with a craving or a difficulty with engagement with the spiritual practices we have found most valuable. We have found that at time we react differently than non-alcoholics or non-addicts to certain medications.

We see many people working their way into recovery that have been incorrectly diagnosed with bipolar. Sure, they look and act bipolar, but that's how you look just coming out of the trenches of alcoholism. Now, some of them have clinical bipolar. They are still able to recover with that bipolar and continue to stay on medication if they have the capacity to be honest and work a strong program. , But if you ask some of the experts or you look at some of the statistics, you'll see that alcoholics are about as likely to have bipolar disorder as normal non-alcoholics. This being the case, look at the amount of people in your support group meeting who are on meds for bipolar. You're going to probably find an abnormal percentage of them. If the statistics are correct, a huge majority of them have been misdiagnosed.

The professionals that prescribe to us are operating to the best of their ability. They are treating symptoms that present in these individuals and they're treating them appropriately. It's not the doctors' fault. It's the alcoholics' fault for going to them before they start recovery. The doctors that have really serious experience with addictive illness will know that these are not symptoms of bipolar. They're symptoms of early sobriety.

It's a huge problem because once a doctor has told you you're bipolar, you're going to tend to believe that. We have found about fifty percent of the people we work with found that they weren't after they've worked the recovery process and then had to wean themselves off of the drug. We think the blame, if at all, needs to go on the alcoholic or the sponsor or the spiritual advisor. You need to understand that if you're in your first thirty days and you haven't worked the steps, you are supposed to be depressed. You are supposed to have anxiety. You are supposed to have terror. You're supposed to have depression and remorse and guilt and resentment.

That's what you're supposed to have. It's part of your illness and you don't treat alcoholism with bipolar medication. You treat alcoholism with a spiritual recovery process. It's complicated and many people are going to get it wrong. They're going to continue to get it wrong for years to come, unfortunately. But what we can do as experienced sponsors or spiritual advisors is we can try to explain to these people how your unmanageability presents, how your untreated alcoholism is supposed to present and what the treatment for it is in the twelve step recovery program.

We're not doctors. We can't really tell whether someone is clinically anything as a sponsor or spiritual advisor. So when in doubt, go to a good doctor. Go to a good psychiatrist, but go to one who specializes in addiction treatment. Don't go to the yellow pages. And it might mean some travel. It might mean four hundred miles to go see your addiction psychiatrist. We need to do this responsibly or else we are going to be in real trouble. Sometimes if you get prescribed heavy enough medications, it's going to interfere with your spiritual recovery process.

As recovered alcoholics we have no professional expertise in this. We only know what we see and the experience of the people that we have worked with. Many addiction professionals will say the same thing.

*"One of the many doctors who had the opportunity to read this book in manuscript form told us that the use of sweets was often helpful, of course, depending upon a doctor's advice. He thought all alcoholics should constantly have chocolate available for its quick energy value at times of fatigue. He added that occasionally in the night, a vague craving would arise which would be satisfied by candy. Many of us have noticed a tendency to eat sweets and have found this practice beneficial."* That's fine for early recovery but they are finding a high level of diabetes associated with alcoholism. Because of the amount of sugar in alcohol, you need to be careful. Don't go crazy and just eat candy.

*"A word about sex relations... alcohol is so stimulating to some men that they have overindulged. Couples are occasionally dismayed to find that when drinking has stopped the man tends to be impotent."* We have never found anybody admitting to that, but let's say for a minute that it's true. *"Unless the reason is understood, there may be an emotional upset. Some of us have had this experience only to enjoy in a few months a finer intimacy than ever. There should be no hesitancy in consulting a doctor or psychologist if the condition persists. We do not know many cases where this difficulty lasted long."* You're in shock your first thirty days sober a lot of times and your body's not going to be reacting normally.

So we just don't worry about some of that stuff right away. Keep your priorities on meetings, steps and service. *"The*

*alcoholic may find it hard to reestablish friendly relations with his children. Their young minds were impressionable while he was drinking. Without saying so, they may cordially hate him for what he has done to them and to their mother. The children are sometimes dominated by a pathetic hardness or cynicism. They cannot seem to forgive and forget. This may hang on for months, long after their mother has accepted their dad's new way of living and thinking.*" We have seen children who haven't talked to their mother or father for years because of what happened during their active alcoholism. We need to understand it's not up to us when they forgive. You need to make direct amends as best as possible and be the best father, mother or the best family member you can be. You can't rush their forgiveness. You can ask for it but you can't rush it.

*"In time they will see that he is a new man and in their own way, they will let him know it. When this happens they can be invited to join in morning meditation and then they can take part in the daily discussion without rancor or bias. From that point on, progress will be rapid. Marvelous results will often follow such a reunion."* In step eleven it talked about morning meditation. Prayer and meditation, they expect at this point in time the father is doing it and has convinced the wife to do it or vice versa. The children are sitting in on morning meditation and prayer. The morning meditation is a family practice. That's what they're recommending. Now is it absolutely essential to have the whole family do the morning meditation and evening review with you? No, not necessarily but they're expecting that you've encouraged them to do so. That's one of the most forgotten in the twelve step fellowships, the morning meditation and the evening review. A majority of members don't do it.

*"Whether the family goes on a spiritual basis or not, the alcoholic member has to if he would recover."* Remember they used to say the morning meditation and evening review were essential. Meetings were desirable. That's how much importance the early AAs put on that practice. The alcoholic member has to if he would recover and live life on a spiritual basis. *"The others must be convinced of his new status beyond a shadow of a doubt. Seeing is believing to most families who have lived with a drinker. Here is a case in point. One of our friends is a heavy smoker and coffee drinker. There was no doubt he overindulged. Seeing this and meaning to be helpful, his wife commenced to admonish him about it. He admitted that he was overdoing these things but frankly said that he was not ready to stop. His wife is one of those persons who really feels there is something rather sinful about these commodities so she nagged and her intolerance finally threw him into a fit of anger and he got drunk. Of course our friend was wrong, dead wrong. He had to painfully admit that and mend his spiritual fences. Though he is now a most effective member of Alcoholics Anonymous, he still smokes and drinks coffee but neither his wife nor anyone else stands in judgment."* Remember that as this is being written, Bill Wilson chain-smoked and drank forty-five cups of coffee a day. In this day and age of health-consciousness, we understand that smoking and drinking coffee, overindulging in either one of them, is really a bad thing to do. Fifty-two percent of the people who come into AA and get sober are going to die from nicotine misuse. Nicotine misuse kills over half of the people that get sober in AA. So did Bill know that at the time? It was not until the 50s when the studies started to come out about how bad smoking actually was. He's writing in the 30s where they used to have doctors do the commercials for cigarette companies. A doctor would say, "I smoke Camels". We need to take some of this material in the historical context that it was written.

*"She sees she was wrong to make a burning issue of such a matter when his more serious ailments were being rapidly cured."* That's true. Take things in perspective. What's the most important? The most important thing is someone is recovering from alcoholism. Don't nag him. Don't bust his chops about every little thing. If that person recovers, he's going to be in the minority and you're going to be very lucky and not have to bury him like most alcoholics or drug addicts. Most alcoholics or drug addicts die way before their time.

*"We have three little mottos which are apropos."* Remember these mottos are in the context of the family unit, A lot of times they throw the mottos up on the wall and people think that following those mottos is working a program. There can't be anything further from the truth. These mottos in context within a family unit are, first things first, live and let live, and easy does it. So take these mottos in the context that they were laid out, and they've basically been laid out for the family members. First things first are Father's alcoholism. He needs to place himself into the fellowship and program of recovery. He then needs to spend much time working with others. Live and let live means let him do what he needs to do to treat his alcoholism. And easy does it means don't be all over the guy about every little thing. You can expand the meaning of these slogans to whatever degree you want to, but if you give a slogan to a brand new alcoholic, he'll misuse it. People have found marvelous benefits in remembering them and trying to apply them, but we have done enough work with newcomers to know that they're more harmful than helpful in most cases. We need to remember its a program of recovery, it's not a program of slogans. It's a program of steps.

When it comes to somebody sharing slogans or short wisdom teachings, we see great harm sometimes. An old-timer will say, , "Kid, if they would have told me I would have to do all them steps, I'd have been right out of here. You know what you got to do? You just got to not drink and you got to come to these meetings. That's what I did." And that works for them. There's nothing really wrong with that except that their alcoholism is in question, it's either heavy drinking or it's a case of mild alcoholism because if a real alcoholic, a hopeless alcoholic tries that, they're going to fail at it. And a lot of times the old-timer doesn't understand the scale of alcoholism and doesn't understand he's way up on the scale. He's not a low-bottom alcoholic. Low-bottom alcoholics need to approach this thing in a whole other way. They need the transformational experience of the spiritual awakening or they drink again.

A lot of times this guy's been around twenty, thirty, forty years, and they think because they did it some way, that's the way you should do it. "Kid, it took me four years before I put pen to paper in a fourth step, but I think anybody that puts pen to paper before four years, they haven't even gotten their head out of their back hind. I can't see how anybody would

be able to do a decent job on a fourth step before they have four years.” Now, that’s somebody sharing their own faulty experience, thinking that because they got away with it, everybody else should. That’s really where the damage comes in with the slogans and the wisdom sayings, it’s too simple. People who can stay sober without a spiritual awakening are very rare. This leads us to believe the people who slogan sling are perhaps in the wrong place, they don’t need what Alcoholics Anonymous offers and are dangerous to the new member.

## To Employers

Bill had worked very hard at putting the original manuscript of the big book together. It was a collaborative effort for the first half of the text. They had a typed manuscript and they passed that around prior to publication of the book. Many people made suggestions about changes that they really thought needed to happen prior to publishing the book and Bill incorporated many of those changes. Sometimes we like to go back to the original manuscript because that’s the way the original alcoholics left it. So going back to the original manuscript, you drill a little bit deeper into their actual experience and thoughts. It has a bit more emphasis on action, a little bit more emphasis on what you need to do, rather than what we did.

So, this chapter, To Employers, experienced significant changes prior to the publication of the first printing, first edition. Oral tradition states that Hank Parkhurst is the person who wrote this story, but you can still hear the voice of Bill Wilson in it. We believe it was heavily redacted by Bill Wilson after Hank handed him the story

Bill would surround himself with people who were enthusiastic about the same things he was enthusiastic about. And prior to the writing of the big book, Hank Parkhurst was his close friend. They actually shared an office. Hank had an office in Newark, New Jersey, for the honor dealers. Honor dealers was an organization he put together to try to break the oil monopolies. He was really upset with the Rockefellers and all the people who were basically controlling and price fixing oil, so he wanted to get a bunch of independent gas stations together to try to compete against these big corporations. It was a failed business but they had the office in Newark, New Jersey, and Bill would show up every day. Instead of doing honor dealer business, Bill would co-opt Hank’s secretary and they would work on different chapters of the big book. So when it came to writing the chapter To Employers, Hank had more experience being an employer than Bill did. Bill never really had hired people or fired people. He did not have a lot of people underneath him. Hank, on the other hand, worked down on the Panama Canal and a number of other jobs where he literally had hundreds of employees, and he did a lot of the early human resource work of hiring and firing. So Bill said, “Hank, you’re the one who really should write this chapter.” We are sure that Bill went through and did a rewrite to it.

Hank relapsed around the time that the book Alcoholics Anonymous was printed so he never got any real credit for this, only from Bill himself. Hank wasn’t really well known as we move through the history of Alcoholics Anonymous because he was unsuccessful, but he actually owned a third of the stock in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill owned a third and a third was sold to friends and AA members to publish this. Hank actually turned in his third of the stock for a bunch of furniture or some crazy deal. It would be worth something like ten million dollars today and he traded it in for a couple of desks. Understand, there are differences between the original manuscript and the chapter in Alcoholics Anonymous.

*“One of our friends...” and that would be Hank Parkhurst...“whose gripping story you have read...” , that story is The Unbeliever in the first edition, “has spent much of his life in the world of big business. He has hired and fired hundreds of men. He knows the alcoholic as the employer sees him. His present views ought to prove exceptionally useful to businessmen everywhere, but let him tell you. I was at one time assistant manager of a corporation department employing sixty-six hundred men. One day, my secretary came in saying that Mr. B. insisted on speaking with me. I told her to say that I was not interested. I had warned this man several times that he had but one more chance. Not long afterward he had called me from Hartford on two successive days, so drunk he could hardly speak. I told him he was through, finally and forever. My secretary returned to say that it was not Mr. B. on the phone. It was Mr. B.’s brother and he wished to give me a message. I still expected a plea for clemency but these words came through the receiver. ‘I just wanted to tell you Paul jumped from the hotel window in Hartford last Saturday. He left us a note saying you were the best boss he’d ever had and you were not to blame in any way.’*

*“Another time as I opened a letter which lay on my desk, a newspaper clipping fell out. It was the obituary of one of the best salesmen I ever had. After two weeks of drinking, he had placed his foot on the trigger of a loaded shot-gun, the barrel was in his mouth. I had discharged him for drinking six weeks before. Still another experience...a woman’s voice came faintly over long distance from Virginia. She wanted to know if her husband’s company’s insurance was still in force. Four days before, he had hanged himself in his woodshed. I have been obliged to discharge him for drinking, though he was brilliant, alert and one of the best organizers I have ever known. Here were three exceptional men, lost to this world because I did not understand as I do now. Then I became an alcoholic myself. But for the intervention of an understanding person, I might have followed in their footsteps. My downfall cost the business community unknown thousands of dollars, for it takes real money to train a man for an executive position. This kind of waste goes on unabated”. “Our business fabric is shot through with it and nothing will stop it but better understanding all around.”*

Now this is an interesting paragraph. In this paragraph, he’s saying if I knew then what I know about the recovery program and about the steps, I probably could have helped to save the lives of three people who died. And he also talks about the money it takes to train an executive. Sometimes the stupidest thing a business can do is fire somebody for drinking. In this day and age, it can take a million dollars to train a really high level executive and you’re going to let him

go when there's actually a recovery process that may not be the best business decision. Good human resource departments, not the type of human resource departments that are all for the company and trying to figure out how to downsize and fire people without getting sued, the real human resource departments that care about their human resources, understand that sometimes the best business decision is to get the guy to treatment and to make sure that they have another chance.

*"You, an employer, want to understand. Nearly every modern employer feels a moral responsibility for the well-being of his help and he usually tries to meet these responsibilities. That he is not always done so for the alcoholic is easily understood. To him, the alcoholic is often seen to be a fool of the first magnitude. Because of the employee's special ability or of his own strong personal attachment to him, the employer has sometimes kept the man at work long beyond the time he ordinarily would. Some employers have tried every known remedy. More often, however, there is very little patience and tolerance, and we who have imposed on the best of employers can scarcely blame them if they've been short with us. Here, for instance, is a typical example. An officer of one of the largest banking institutions in America knows I no longer drink. One day he told me about an executive from the same bank who, from his description, was undoubtedly alcoholic. This seemed to me to be an opportunity for me to be helpful, so I spent a good two hours talking about alcoholism, the malady, I described the symptoms and supported my statement with plenty of evidence. His comment was, "Very interesting but I'm sure this man is done drinking. He has just returned from a three month leave of absence, had taken a cure, looks fine and to clinch the matter, the board of directors told him that this was his last chance."* Now this is a beautiful example of a complete misunderstanding of what's needed. I told him that he's fired if he gets drunk again. He's not going to get drunk again. That's a complete misunderstanding of alcoholism.

We like the way Hank went to this guy and talked about the powerlessness, talked about the malady, and explained what alcoholism was. When he gets done with that, the guy still doesn't get it. He still doesn't understand what powerlessness looks like and how it shows up. So he's not really interested in getting involved further than threatening to fire him if he gets drunk again.

*"My rejoinder was that if I could afford it, I would bet him a hundred to one, the man would go on a bigger bust than ever. I felt this was inevitable and that the bank was doing a possible injustice. Why not bring the man in contact with some of our alcoholic crowd? He might have a chance. I pointed out I'd had nothing to drink whatever for three years and this in the face of difficulties that would have made nine out of ten men drink their heads off. Why not at least afford him an opportunity to hear my story. "Oh, no," said my friend, "this chap is either through with liquor or he is minus a job. If he has your willpower and guts, he will make the grade."* Again, this is a complete misunderstanding of alcoholism.

Hank was betting a hundred to one. The guy went and had a cure. He went for several months to a sanitarium and he'd had the booze cure. And he was coming back. Hank still knew the guy was going to relapse. When somebody strolls into a fellowship meeting and he's just been to treatment and he's not going to engage in the steps and we are pretty sure he's a real alcoholic, we would bet a hundred to one, too, that they're not going to make it, because what's necessary is, actually going through these steps.

It's become very fashionable to discuss the challenges of every day life in support group meetings. Back in these early days, they were about the business of getting somebody through the steps. That was what they called the cure, although you're never cured, you're only recovered. They called it the cure in the early days. And the people that took that cure, the steps, they stayed sober and the people that didn't usually got drunk. Hank understood that if this guy doesn't get involved in a spiritual recovery process, he's not going to make it. It doesn't matter that he had the cure. It doesn't matter that he went to treatment. And the same thing is true today when people go to rehab and don't come out and work the steps.

*"I wanted to throw up my hands in discouragement for I saw that my banking acquaintance had missed the point entirely. He simply could not believe that his brother executive suffered from a deadly malady. There was nothing to do but wait. Presently the man did slip and of course was fired. Following his discharge, our group contacted him. Without much ado, he accepted our principles and procedures. He is undoubtedly on the high road to recovery. To me, this incident illustrates a lack of understanding and knowledge on the part of employers, lack of understanding as to what really ails the alcoholic and lack of knowledge as to what part the employers might profitably take in salvaging their sick employees."*

Without much ado, following a discharge, our group contacted him. Without much ado, he accepted our principles and procedures. He's now on the high road to recovery. That really is a statement of hope. What they were doing back then was really working. *"To begin with I think you employers would do well to disregard your own drinking experience or lack of it. Whether you are a hard drinker, a moderate drinker or a teetotaler, you have but little notion of the inner workings of the alcoholic mind."* There are a lot of non-alcoholics in support group meetings. They've found their way in there for one reason or another. And the people who are heavy drinkers, the potential alcoholics, they do not understand the real alcoholic. They do not understand the inner workings of the alcoholic mind. We have met very few people who were non-alcoholic who understood the inner workings of the alcoholic mind and they were professionals in the treatment field. You have to experience powerlessness to really be able to understand it.

Putting the steps on the wall of a meeting leads to people working the steps off the wall and when you do that, your program is off the wall. There are a lot of people who think that because they go to a lot of step meetings that they've taken the steps. We understand the hopeless alcoholic. We understand the person who has desperately tried a whole lot of different things, multiple treatments, multiple times, in and out of the support groups. We understand those people and we usually can break through to them pretty quickly if we do what this book says. We talk about the hopelessness of the

malady.

The hopelessness of the malady isn't the most popular thing to share in most support groups. They want to talk about the challenges of life and how they feel about them and what's going on. They don't want to talk about powerlessness. They don't want to talk about hopelessness. They don't want to talk about a solution. There are groups that do but they're in the minority. If you identify yourself just from the description in this book as a real alcoholic, a hopeless alcoholic, you're going to need the recovery process. If you're able to stay sober in the meetings alone, you're going to be lucky. But even if that's the case, you're going to be incredibly unhappy. You're going to be suffering from all kinds of emotional, mental, psychic trauma. Just staying sober will not be enough, you need to be offered something more. You need to be offered a change in attitude and outlook.

*"Instead, you may have some pretty strong opinions, perhaps prejudices, based on your own experiences. Those of you who drink moderately are almost certain to be more annoyed with an alcoholic than a total abstainer would be. Drinking occasionally and understanding your own reactions, it is possible for you to become quite sure of many things which so far as the alcoholic is concerned are not always so."* This happens in the support groups today. The people who come in and are able to just put the plug in the jug, they don't understand the people who can't.

If you try to tell them that it's a non-alcoholic trying to compare themselves to an alcoholic and you will be dropping an H-bomb in that meeting. But if you use this textbook and the descriptions in it you're going to see that the person who can put the plug in the jug is not described as a hopeless alcoholic in this book. They're described as a heavy drinker, a problem drinker. So again, the saddest thing is the misunderstanding that happens with relapsing alcoholics in groups filled with people who aren't alcoholic. The big book movement, for want of a better term, is trying to address that. The exact person AA was designed to help is not finding help in AA. The big book movement is really trying to undo that travesty of justice. Every once in a while one of those hopeless alcoholics who has recovered is going to find his way into your meeting and annoy the heavy drinkers because he's going to start talking about the problem and talking about the solution, as we're supposed to.

Heavy drinkers are the first people who will say, "It says in the book, we know only a little. My therapist says..." They're the first people who are going to say something like that and you'll understand immediately what you're dealing with, unfortunately. Let's say you're a person who wants to go to AA, you want to join up with AA, how foolish would it be to disregard the textbook for AA? How ridiculous would it be to be in a meeting and brag, "I don't deal with that textbook, I do it this way"? Let's say you want to get a calculus experience and you go and you sign up for calculus and you absolutely refuse to open the textbook. You just sit in the calculus classroom, hearing about calculus, raising your hand and sharing about calculus but you never open the book. You never do any exercises. You never solve any of the problems so you never get the calculus experience. That would be kind of stupid. You'd be wasting your money. People do this all the time in twelve step groups. They ignore the twelve steps and hold court and act like they've really got something to share when they've got no experience with recovery.

They're sharing opinions and all of a sudden somebody will come in and share an experience and they'll get mad at them. And that's usually because very few people have experience with the actual step work. It's, only the minority in any twelve step fellowship who have real experience with recovery.

*"As a moderate drinker, you can take your liquor or leave it alone. Whenever you want to, you can control your drinking. Of an evening, you can go on a mild bender, get up in the morning, shake your head, go to business. To you, liquor is no real problem. You cannot see why it should be with anyone else, save the spineless and stupid."*

*"When dealing with an alcoholic, you have to fight an ingrained annoyance that he could be so weak, stupid and irresponsible. Even when you understand the malady better, you may still have to check this feeling and remember that your employee is very ill, being seldom as weak and irresponsible as he appears."* Powerlessness is not being weak and irresponsible. It's being powerless. It's a completely different concept. It's not being morally depraved or spineless or weak. It's being powerless. *"Take a look at the alcoholic in your organization. Is he not usually brilliant, fast-thinking, imaginative and likeable?"* Remember, an alcoholic was writing this. You ask about alcoholics at Al-Anon, they might have some different opinions.

*"When sober, does he not work hard and have a knack for getting things done? Review his qualities and ask yourself whether he would be worth retaining. If sober, do you owe him the same obligation you feel toward other sick employees?"* If somebody goes out on leave for cancer, do you fire them? "Is he worth salvaging? If your decision is yes, whether the reason be humanitarian or business or both then you will wish to know what to do. The first part has to do with you. Can you stop feeling that you are dealing only with habit, with stubbornness or a weak will? If you have difficulty about that, I suggest you reread chapters two and three of this book, where the alcoholic sickness is discussed at length." For any understanding of step one, for any understanding of powerlessness, you need to internalize chapters two and three of this book. Before you can be a sponsor or go help somebody, you better know chapter two and chapter three, because if you can't describe the problem to the individual you are talking to, you are never going to be able to convince them of your solution. What do you have to offer if you can't detail the problem and then detail the solution?

*"You, as a businessman, know better than most that when you deal with any problem, you must know what it is. Having conceded that your employee is ill, can you forgive him for what he has done in the past? Can you shelve the resentment you may hold because of his past absurdities? Can you fully appreciate that the man has been a victim of crooked thinking directly caused by the action of alcohol in his brain? I well remember the shock I received when a prominent doctor in Chicago told me of cases where pressure of the spinal fluid actually ruptured the brain from within. No wonder an alcoholic is strangely irrational. Who would be with such a fevered brain? Normal drinkers are not so handicapped."*

Some of their perspective on physiology is dated, but we understand what they mean.

*"Your man has probably been trying to conceal a number of strays, perhaps pretty messy ones. They may disgust you. You may be puzzled by them being unable to understand how such a seemingly above-board chap could be so involved. But you can generally change these, no matter how bad to the abnormal action of alcohol on this mind. When drinking or getting over a bout, the alcoholic is sometimes the model of honesty when normal will do incredible things. Afterward his revulsion will be terrible. Nearly always these antics will indicate nothing more than temporary aberrations and you should so treat them."* If you put a quart and a half of whiskey in your body you're going to do some things that you normally wouldn't do sober.

Who knows what that much alcohol does to your brain, but the alcoholic goes into a blackout and is standing and conscious but not really sane. And this is basically what Hank is telling us here. *"This is not to say that all alcoholics are honest and upright when not drinking. Of course that isn't so and you will have to be careful that such people don't impose on you. Seeing your attempt to understand and help, some will try to take advantage of your kindness. If you're sure your man does not want to stop, you may as well discharge him, the sooner the better. You are not doing him a favor by keeping him on. Firing such an individual may prove a blessing to him. It may be just the jolt he needs. I know in my own particular case that nothing my company could have done would have stopped me for so long as I was able to hold my position. I could not possibly realize how serious my situation was. Had they fired me first and had they then taken steps to see that I was presented with the solution contained in this book, I might have returned to them six months later a well man. But there are many men who want to stop right now, and with them you can go far. If you make a start, you should be prepared to go the limit, not in the sense that any great expense or trouble is to be expected, but rather in the matter of your own attitude, your understanding of the treatment of the case. Perhaps you have such a man in mind. He wants to quit drinking and you want to help him, even if it only be a matter of good business. You know something of alcoholism because you read chapters two and three. You see that he is mentally and physically sick. You are willing to overlook his past performances. Suppose you called the man in and go at him like this..."* This is probably the first example of an intervention, an employment intervention. *"Hit him pointblank with that thought that you know all about his drinking and that it must stop. Say you appreciate his abilities, would like to keep him but cannot if he continues to drink, that you mean just what you say and you should mean it too. Next, assure him that you are not preparing to lecture, moralize or condemn, that if you have done so formerly, it was because you misunderstood. Say if you possibly can that you have no hard feelings toward him. Bring out the idea of alcoholism the sickness. Enlarge on that fully."* As it's done in chapter two and three. *"Remark that you have been looking into the matter. You are sure of what you say, hence your change of attitude, hence your willingness to deal with the problem as though it were a disease. You are willing to look at your man as a gravely ill person with this qualification, being perhaps fatally ill. Does your man want to get well and right now? You ask because many alcoholics being warped and drugged do not want to quit. But does he? Will he take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well, to stop drinking forever? If he says yes..."* This is the same kind of qualification we go over when we're attempting to take somebody through the steps.

*"If he says yes, does he really mean it or down inside does he think he is fooling you and that after rest and treatment he will be able to get away with a few drinks now and then? Probe your man thoroughly on these points. Be satisfied he's not deceiving himself or you. Not a word about this book unless you are sure you ought to introduce it at this juncture. If he temporizes and still thinks he can ever drink again, even beer, you may as well discharge him after the next bender which, if he is an alcoholic, he is certain to have. Tell him that emphatically and mean it. Either you are dealing with a man who can and will get well, or you are not. If not, don't waste time with him. This may seem severe but it is usually the best course."* They need to say, "Yes, I'm willing to quit drinking. I want to quit drinking for good and for all and I'm willing to go to any lengths to do it.

*"After satisfying yourself that your man wants to recover and will go to any extremes to do so, you may suggest a definite course of action. For most alcoholics who are drinking or who are just getting over a spree, a certain amount of physical treatment is desirable..."* detoxing... *"...even imperative. Some physicians favor cutting off the liquor sharply and prefer to use little or no sedative. This may be wise in some instances but for most of us it is barbaric torture. For severe cases, most doctors favor a slow, tapering down process followed by a health farm or sanitarium."* And that's the way it is today. They'll put you on Ativan and they'll put you on Librium today. It's insane, if somebody is a heavy-duty alcoholic to just take the alcohol away from them. They could die in the DT's.

*"Other doctors prefer a few days of detoxification, removal of poisons from the system by carthotics, belladonna and the like, followed by a week of mild exercise and rest."* They don't do it this way anymore, medical procedures have changed. *"Having tried them all, I personally favor the latter, though the matter of physical treatment should, of course, be referred to your own doctor. Whatever the method, its object should be to thoroughly clear mind and body of the effects of alcohol. In competent hands, this seldom takes long nor should it be very expensive. Your man is entitled to be placed in such physical condition that he can think straight and no longer physically crave liquor."* As long as liquor's in your system, you crave it if you're an alcoholic.

They say we favor hospitalization for the besotted. In the early days during the twelve step calls, they would put you in the hospital, make sure you were detoxed and then they would come in and start talking to you. *"These handicaps must be removed if you are going to give him the chance you want him to have. Propose such a procedure to him. Offer to advance the cost of treatment if necessary but make it plain that any expense will later be deducted from his pay. Make him fully responsible. It is much better for him."* Okay, that really is a good principle. Remember, all they're recommending in this book is detox. They really never recommend the 28-day or the 90-day thing that we see today.

They recommend detoxing and then they recommend the AA program be presented right after this.

*"When your man accepts your offer, point out that physical treatment is but a small part of the picture. Though you are providing him with the best possible medical attention, he should understand that he must undergo a change of heart. To get over drinking will require a transformation of thought and attitude. He must place recovery above everything, even home and business, for without recovery, he will lose both."* So many people amble into sobriety and amble into the twelve step fellowships, but they don't make it a priority in their life. The things that happen in their family or the things that happen in their business take precedence. This book is saying if you do that, if you allow business or family life to override your needs as far as your recovery process, you're probably going to lose all of it, your recovery, your business and your family.

Say you're going to meetings Monday through Saturday; we don't really see a problem taking a day off to go to church. The most dangerous thing we have seen is people who are really involved in their religion come into AA to try to find converts, then drag them out of the recovery fellowships and into their faith and then really don't take responsibility when the individual relapses. It's not the person's fault who's relapsing.

*"Show that you have every confidence in his ability to recover. While on the subject of confidence, tell him that so far as you are concerned, this will be a strictly personal matter. His alcoholic derelictions, the treatment about to be undertaken, these will never be discussed without his consent. Cordially wish him success and say you want to have a long chat with him on his return. To return to the subject matter of this book, it contains, as you have seen, full directions by which your employee may solve his problem."* Full directions by which his employee may solve his problem...they're basically saying if you do the things in this book, your problem is solved.

*"To you, some of the ideas which it contains are novel. Perhaps some of them don't make sense to you. Possibly you are not quite in sympathy with the approach we suggest. By no means do we offer it as the last word on the subject but so far as we are concerned, it has been the best word so far. Our approach often does work. After all, you are looking for results rather than methods. Whether your employee likes it or not, he will learn the grim truth about alcoholism. That won't hurt him a bit, though he does not go for the remedy at first. I suggest you draw our book to the attention of the doctor who is to attend your patient during treatment. Ask that the book be read the moment the patient is able, while he is acutely depressed if possible. The doctor should approve a spiritual approach. Besides, he ought to tell the patient the truth about his condition, whatever that happens to be. The doctor should encourage him to acquire a spiritual experience. At this stage, it will be just as well if the doctor does not mention you in connection with the book. Above all neither you, the doctor nor anyone should place himself in the position of telling the man he must abide by the contents of this volume. The man must decide for himself. You cannot command him. You can only encourage and you will surely agree that it may be better to withhold any criticism you have of our method until you see whether it works. You are betting of course that your changed attitude and the contents of this book will turn the trick. In some cases it will and in others it will not. But we think that if you persist, the percentage of successes will gratify you. When our work spreads and our numbers increase, we hope that your employees will be put in personal contact with some of us, which needlessly to say will be more effective. Meanwhile we are sure a great deal can be accomplished if you will follow the suggestions of this chapter."* They're really expecting you to just be able to do the instructions in this book, without any contact with any other recovered alcoholics. That's one of the things that have been forgotten about this book. This was supposed to provide mail order recovery.

Now, they found through experience, that it's a lot easier for people to buy into this process if they can see that there's other people who have bought into and who are recovered. There is no doubt about that. But when this book was being written the fellowship was growing, they didn't have meetings everywhere. So they really expected this volume to be able to produce mail order recovery, and in many cases it has. But the majority of the success has come from spreading it from one alcoholic to the other.

*"On your employee's return, call him in and ask him what happened. Ask him if he thinks he has the answer. Get him to tell you how he thinks it will work and what he has to do about it. Make him feel free to discuss his problems with you if he cares to. Show him you understand and you will not be upset by anything he wishes to say. In this connection, it is important that you remain undisturbed as the man proceeds to tell you things that may shock you. He may tell you, for example, that he has padded his expense account or that he has planned to take your best customers away from you. In fact, he may say almost anything if he's accepted our solution which, as you know, demands rigorous honesty. Charge this off as you would a bad account and start afresh with him. If he owes you money, make terms that are reasonable. From this point on, never rake up the past unless he wants to discuss it. If he speaks of his home situation, be patient and make helpful suggestions. Let him see that he can talk frankly with you so long as he does not bear tales or criticize others. With the kind of employee you want to keep, such an attitude will command undying loyalty. The greatest enemies of the alcoholic are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration and fear. Wherever men are gathered together in business there will be rivalries and arising out of these, a certain amount of office politics. Sometimes the alcoholic has the idea that people are trying to pull him down. Often this is not so at all but sometimes his drinking will be used as the basis of criticism."*

*"One instance comes to mind in which a malicious individual was always making friendly little jokes of an alcoholic's drinking exploits. In another case, an alcoholic was sent to a hospital for treatment. Only a few knew of it at first, but within a short time, it was bill-boarded throughout the entire company. Naturally this sort of thing decreases a man's chance of recovery. The employer should make it his business to protect the victim from this kind of talk if he can. The employer cannot play favorites but he can always try to defend a man from needless provocation and unfair criticism. As*

*a class, alcoholics are energetic people. They work hard and they play hard. Your man will be on his mettle to make good. Being somewhat weakened and faced with physical and mental readjustment to a life which knows no alcohol, he may overdo. Don't let him work sixteen hours a day just because he wants to. Encourage him to play once in awhile. Make it possible for him to do so. He may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something may certainly come up during business hours. Don't begrudge him a reasonable amount of time. This work is necessary to maintain his sobriety."* What's necessary to maintain somebody's sobriety? Going out and doing twelve step calls.

Sometime people come into meetings very confused. If you're in a twelve step fellowship that's closed and somebody comes in who doesn't identify themselves as an alcoholic, first of all, you have to ask yourself, does he even know what the definition of that is. Has anybody sat with him? Somebody probably should get with the individual and talk to him about the problem, about what powerlessness is. If it's an alcohol fellowship, talk to him about alcoholism. If it's a drug fellowship, talk to him about what being a drug addict is. But you don't shame them and you don't throw them out. They may never come back. We have seen it happen, a group conscience will break out and they'll say "let's open this meeting up and talk about step one." We think that's an appropriate way to go.

Sometimes the only requirement for membership in some of these fellowships is ridiculous, really. Let's just say the only requirement for membership in a particular fellowship would be the desire to stop drinking. Some of us can't say that we have the desire to stop drinking, we stopped long ago. We have the desire to stay stopped. That's a completely different thing. You have to understand that you're there to be helpful. It helps your program to be helpful. What kind of help are you if you are the guy to raise his hand and say, "Get out of here. This is closed"? What kind of recovery is that? That's intolerant and it's judgmental.

However we do believe in a primary purpose. Any group that wants participation to be alcoholic or participation to be drug addict or cocaine addict has the right to their primary purpose, but you don't use directives, you don't use traditions to hurt people. That's not what they're for. They're there to protect the integrity of the fellowship, but if you're hurting individuals, that hurts the integrity of the fellowship. Have somebody qualify them; you're supposed to be qualifying people anyway. In the early days, nobody went to the meetings first. They went through the steps first. They weren't even invited to the meetings until they had some recovery experience.

A responsible member will take responsibility and try to get some of that individual's time and at least explain to him what the heck is going on. If you don't have informed members, you're going to have chaos in your group.

*"After your man has gone along without drinking for a few months, try to make use of his services with other employees who are giving you the alcoholic run-around, provided, of course, they are willing to have a third party in the picture. Don't hesitate to let the alcoholic who has recovered but holds a relatively unimportant job talk to a man with a better position. Being on a radically different basis of life, he will never take advantage of the situation."* Some us contact the human resource department. We would let them know because they are going to be the people who have to deal with the alcohol problems. We can say, "I haven't had a drink in so many years. I'm a recovered alcoholic. I can really be of help if you have an alcoholic problem or an alcoholic employee who wants to have help or needs to talk. I'm available." We wouldn't let everybody know but we would let the human resource department know.

There's HIPA and there's anti-discrimination policy's these days. Alcoholism and drug addiction are diseases and if you discriminate against somebody for them in the wrong way, you can have a discrimination suit.

*"You must trust your man. Long experience with alcoholic excuses naturally makes you suspicious. When his wife next calls saying he is sick, don't jump to the conclusion he is drunk. If he is and is still trying to recover upon our basis, he will presently tell you about it. Even if it means the loss of his job, for he knows he must be honest if he would live at all. Let him see you are not bothering your head about him at all. You are not suspicious nor are you trying to run his life so he will be shielded from temptation to drink. If he is conscientiously following the program of recovery, he can go anywhere your business may call him. Do not promote him, however, until you are sure. In case he does stumble, even once, you will have to decide whether to let him go. If you are sure he doesn't mean business, there is no doubt you should discharge him. If on the contrary, you are sure he is doing his utmost, you may wish to give him another chance. But you should feel under no obligation to do so for your obligation has been discharged already. In any event, don't let him fool you and don't let sentiment get the better of you if you are sure he ought to go. There's another thing you might do."*

*"If your organization is a large one, your junior executives might be provided with this book. You might let them know you have no quarrel with the alcoholics of your organization. These juniors are often in a difficult position. Men under them are frequently their friends, so for one reason or another, they cover these men, hoping matters will take a turn for the better. They often jeopardize their own positions by trying to help serious drinkers who should have been fired long ago or else given an opportunity to get well. After reading this book, a junior executive can go to such a man and say, 'Look here, Ed. Do you want to stop drinking or not? You put me on the spot every time you get drunk. It isn't fair to me or the firm. I've been learning something about alcoholism. If you are an alcoholic, you're a mighty sick man. You sure act like one. The firm wants to help you get over it if you are interested. There is a way out and I hope you have sense enough to try it. If you do, your past will be forgotten and this fact that you went away for treatment will not be mentioned. But if you cannot or will not stop drinking, I think you ought to resign."*

*"Your junior executive may not agree with the contents of this book. He need not and often should not show it to his alcoholic prospect but at least he will understand the problem and will be no longer misled by ordinary promises. He will be able to take a position with such a man which is imminently fair and square. He will have no further reason for covering up an alcoholic employee. It boils right down to this. No man should be fired just because he is alcoholic. If he wants to stop, he should be afforded a real chance. If he cannot or does not want to stop, he should usually be*

*discharged. The exceptions are few. We think this method of approach will accomplish several things for you. It will promptly bring drinking situations to light. It will enable you to restore good men to useful activity. At the same time you will feel no reluctance to rid yourself of those who cannot or will not stop. Alcoholism may be causing your organization considerable damage in its waste of money, men and reputation. We hope our suggestions will help you plug up this sometimes serious leak. We do not expect you to become a missionary, attempting to save who may be alcoholic."*

"Being a businessman is enough these days, but we can sensibly urge that you stop this waste and give your worthwhile man a chance. The other day an approach was made to the vice president of a large industrial concern. He remarked, 'I'm mighty glad you fellows got over your drinking but the policy of this company is not to interfere with the habits of our employees. If a man drinks so much that his job suffers, we fire him. I don't see how you can be of any help to us for as you see, we don't have any alcoholic problem.' This same company sends millions for research every year. Their cost of production is figured to a fine decimal point. They have recreational facilities. They have company insurance. There is real interest, both humanitarian and business, in the well-being of employees. But alcoholism, well, they just don't have it. Perhaps this is a typical attitude. We who have collectively seen a great deal of business life, at least from the alcoholic angle, have had to smile at this gentleman's opinion. He might be shocked if he knew how much alcoholism cost his organization every year. That company may harbor many actual or potential alcoholics. We believe that managers of large enterprises often have little idea how prevalent this problem is. Perhaps this is a guess but we have a hunch it's a good one. If you still feel your organization has no alcoholic problem, you might well take another look down the line. You may make some interesting discoveries." Of course this chapter refers to alcoholics, sick people, deranged men".

*"What our friend, the vice president, had in mind was the habitual or whoopee drinker. As to them, his policy is probably sound, but as you see, he does not distinguish between such people and the alcoholic."* That's one of the big problems today, distinguishing between the habitual or whoopee drinker and the alcoholic.

*"Being a businessman, you might like to have a summary of this chapter. Here it is. One, acquaint yourself with the nature of alcoholism. Two, be prepared to discount and forget your man's past. Three, confidentially offer him medical treatment and cooperation provided you think he wants to stop. Four, have the alcohol thoroughly removed from his system and give him a chance to recover physically. Five, have the doctor in attendance present him with this book, but don't cram it down his throat. Six, have a frank talk with him when he gets back from his treatment, assuring him of your full support, encouraging him to say anything he wishes about himself and making it clear the past will not be held against him. Seven, ask him to place recovery from alcoholism ahead of all else. Eight, don't let him overwork. Nine, protect him when justified from malicious gossip. Ten, if after you have shot the works he will not stop, then let him go. It is not to be expected that you give your alcoholic employee disproportionate amount of time and attention. He is not to be made a favorite. The right kind of man, the kind who recovers, will not want this sort of thing. He will not impose upon you. Far from it, he will work like the devil and thank you to his dying day."*

*"Today I own a little company. There are two alcoholic employees who produce as much as five normal salesmen. Why not? They have a better way of life and they have been saved from a living death. I have enjoyed every moment spent in getting them straightened out. You, Mr. Employer, may have the same experience."*

Many of the suggestions to the employer come out of the chapter "Working With Others". They're sound principles for working with the alcoholic.

## A Vision For You 1

So far we are trying to share our experience, strength and hope with this material, coming from a place where we have done this work, so we're looking back on it from a place of experience. Another thing to understand is the book Alcoholics Anonymous is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous. A textbook usually needs to be taught, so we're trying to teach this material. There's probably a little bit of informed philosophy that we have about this process that comes through, but because it is a textbook it really helps to go through with someone who has experience than someone reading this for the first time.

. This is chapter eleven and we can look at this as a summation chapter. Bill is finishing it up but he's talking about a vision. We see two visions in this chapter. One vision is untreated alcoholism, chronic alcoholism. And then we see a vision of hope, of recovery. And then he talks about both of those in this chapter. This is a great chapter for anybody out there who thinks that sobriety is the whole point of this book or the twelve step fellowship. You'll see that that's not the case at all. There's a state known as recovered that can be infinitely wonderful in many different ways. He talks about that in this vision. .

*"For most normal folks, drinking means conviviality, companionship and colorful imagination. It means release from care, boredom and worry. It is joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good, but not so with us in those last days of heavy drinking. The old pleasures were gone. They were but memories. Never could we recapture the great moments of the past. There was an insistent yearning to enjoy life as we once did and a heartbreaking obsession that some new miracle of control would enable us to do it. There was always one more attempt and one more failure."* Most normal people, even heavy drinkers, can use alcohol. Alcohol works as a social lubricant. It works as a relaxing agent. It works in many different ways for a normal person, and alcohol itself is not necessarily bad or evil. What happens is with the alcoholic and the progression of alcoholism, it gets to the point where we're constantly wondering why we can't enjoy our drinking like we used to.

Why we can't recapture some of the wonderful moments that alcohol helped us have in the past, we don't see why we can't figure it out. They say that the number one obsession of every alcoholic is thinking that somehow, someday they'll learn to control and enjoy their drinking again. That's a good picture of the alcoholic. They're forever trying to figure it out and it never gets any better. Once you've crossed the line and you find that you've lost your power, choice and control, it really is very rare that you're going to be able to regain that control, no matter what books they try to sell you or pills they try to give you. It's just over. You're never going to be able to control your drinking again.

If we put enough alcohol in our body, we get the craving for more. Once that craving is going, we are going to have a whole lot of trouble trying to control the input. We become convinced that our liver and pancreas are never going to heal to the point where they'll be able to metabolize alcohol like a non-alcoholic.

We worked with a guy who's had two esophageal varices and continued to drink, even though twelve doctors were saying it was going to kill him. He's back in the hospital in our area again with a third esophagus hemorrhage and now he's got real problems. He's got full-blown cirrhosis of the liver. This is an individual who was told, "You're going to die if you keep drinking." He says, "Thanks for the information" and kept drinking. This really is a horrible, cunning, powerful, baffling aggressive illness, when to know that when you drink you'll probably die and do that anyway is just amazing.

*"The less people tolerated us, the more we withdrew from society and from life itself. We became subjects of king alcohol, shivering denizens of his mad realm. The chilling vapor that is loneliness settled down, it thickened, ever becoming blacker. Some of us sought out sordid places, hoping to find understanding companionship and approval. Momentarily we did. Then would come oblivion and the awful waking to face the hideous four horsemen...terror, bewilderment, frustration, despair. Unhappy drinkers who read this page will understand."*

Many of us were a shivering denizen of alcohol's mad realm, especially on the weekend. It had us in its grip. We were lonely. Everybody gets pushed away when you're a violent alcoholic. Everybody gets pushed away but that doesn't mean that you're not still lonely. And it was a nightmare. After a really strong bender, after being drunk for days, coming to, the hideous four horsemen – terror, bewilderment, frustration and despair, anybody that's gone through the delirium tremens, anybody who's had serious withdrawal symptoms from alcohol, understands that. Terror isn't the word for it. It is unbelievably uncomfortable to go through that. This a vision of what our life used to be like.

*"Now and then a serious drinker, being dry for the moment, says, 'I don't miss it at all, feel better, work better, having a better time...'"* As ex-problem drinkers, we can smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly, he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them. He will presently try the old game again, for he isn't happy about his sobriety. He cannot picture life without alcohol. Someday he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end." This is an interesting paragraph. It starts out talking about the drinker who says, "I don't miss alcohol at all. I feel better. I work better. I'm having a better time." That's usually the person who remains unconvinced that there's a lot of work to do to move into recovery.

That's usually the person who says, "Oh, I gotta go to all those meetings?" or "You want me to come over and do the steps with you?" or "a service commitment? I'm busy." That's usually the type of person who doesn't get it. They remain unconvinced that they really need to dedicate their life to the processes that are going to bring about their recovery. A lot of times they're not seeing things clearly. They're not seeing things from a sane perspective and they're going to continue to relapse because they're not doing enough to prevent the relapse and to engage in the spiritual work that allows God to remove the obsession.

There what we sometimes call "not ready". They're not ready. They haven't hit a bottom sufficient to convince them that they need to do the things that you need to do to remain sober. But if alcoholic, the progression is going to get to the point where they won't be able to picture a life without alcohol or with alcohol. And I know what that feels like too. We know what it feels like to know that there's probably no way you're going to be able to get away from alcohol, but there's probably no way you're going to be able to survive without experiencing what it does to you.

It is the jumping-off place, some people wish for the end and some people make the end happen. The alcoholic is something like fifty or sixty times more likely to take their own life through suicide than a non-alcoholic because they get to this pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. They get to this jumping-off point where they cannot picture their life going on the way it's going on. And it's a sad place.

*"We have shown how we got out from under."* When they talked about the steps, the step process is how they got out from under. "You say, 'Yes, I'm willing but am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum like some righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?'"

MM: Sure.

The alcoholic will say "when I am sober, sobriety becomes untenable. My mental and emotional state deteriorated to such a point where I just cannot deal and alcohol looms on the horizon as an answer, even a bad one. At least it's an answer". So to soft sell the program of recovery, to tell somebody that all you need to do is a ninety and ninety or something is not sufficient. "We say, we want a sufficient substitute. Because I get a little bit of freedom, I get a little bit of escape with the alcohol. Yes, it causes tons of problems, but at least it's a vacation, a short vacation away from me. I can't stand me anymore. Have you a sufficient substitute?" The whole message we see in recovery is yes, yes there is a substitute. There's an amazing substitute. Everything you've ever wanted out of alcohol, everything you've ever wanted out of life is available on the other side of recovery. That really is the great message that this book shares and it gets sold short so often in the twelve step meetings.

If we're attending meetings where all that's being discussed is the drama and situations in their life, like it's group therapy.

There are people that do that who are probably well-meaning people. How do you know what you don't know? They just don't know that they've come from treatment or they've come from group therapy and they think that's how you do this twelve step thing. They don't know that that's completely wrong. It's up to the experienced members of that particular fellowship to politely try to steer the meeting back to a solution. If somebody has just shared ten minutes on their in-laws coming over and the dog tearing up the furniture and their ungrateful children and stupid and irresponsible boss, it's up to us sometimes to share, "I know exactly what you're talking about, prior to going through the ninth step, I had resentments and misunderstandings about all these problems in my life and until I had gone through this process, I really thought that it was these other people's fault, and getting to the other side of recovery and I've found that my problems were of my own making. It's not the situations that are my problems, but my reactions and my attitude to them."

So if we share in a way like that, we can flip it back to a solution. The fact of the matter is as experienced members, as responsible members, of any specific twelve step fellowship, we're supposed to share our experience, our strength and our hope. Our experience is what we did. Our strength is where it brought us and our hope is what it's like today. And we're supposed to share that. We're not supposed to continually regurgitate the issues, problems and situations that we've gone through our whole lives in a way that shows the newcomers that nothing ever gets better. We're not really supposed to do that as experienced members.

Now, there are a lot of inexperienced members that are going to be at every twelve step fellowship. There's always going to be people who don't have a working knowledge of the twelve step recovery process. Sometimes we have to have some patience toward those individuals because they will drive you crazy. But again, as responsible members, we need to continue to be pointing out that there is a solution. There's a vision. There's a vision for you. Recovery is possible. We can be happy, joyous and free. We can have our problems solved and/or removed. That's what this book promises. Because of the different things that have happened in the different fellowships making the book Alcoholics Anonymous non-conference approved literature in a number of fellowships that are substance abuse fellowships was a bad idea. It was always a bad idea. You do not take the foundational twelve step document out of the hands of the people who really need it, but that's done. So again, as experienced members it's up to carry a message with depth and weight. And that's not always going to make you the most popular person in the room.

It almost seems like a badge of honor sometimes to be really screwed up and admitting to it in some of the contemporary twelve step meetings. Some people really pride themselves on their ability to not do everything right but still show up in the meeting week after week after week. That's not the goal of this whole thing. Survival and meeting attendance is not the goal of recovery. The goal of recovery is to recover and to get to a point where you are happy, joyous and free.

There are tons of heavy drinkers in AA and there are tons of heavy drug users in NA and they can get away with being completely unrecovered year after year after year because they're not at a critical stage like the real drug addict or the real alcoholic. Those individuals cannot just show up and admit to how messed up they are every week and have that be a defense against alcoholism. It's not going to work. It's not aggressive enough.

So there's a lot of really bad information and there's a lot of really bad behavior in the twelve step fellowships and you have to understand that going in. You also have to understand that the person sitting on the left of you and the person sitting on the right of you, if you're going to work a program like they are, you're probably not going to make it if you're in real trouble. You're going to need to really pay attention to what you need to do and not try to copy other members of the group because there's a real good chance that they're not alcoholic or they're not really a drug addict. They're in there thinking that they are but they still have power, choice and control over when they put it in their body and sometimes even over how much they use when they do so. So they're not like you if you have alcoholism or if you're really a drug addict. That's something else that you need to know.

And that's not information that normally gets shared very often. The chairman of the group doesn't go up and share that fact because it's looked on as elitist or it creates a schism in the group or its anti-unity. What the sad fact today is is that there are just so few people giving other members the dignity of an accurate appraisal by helping them go through the material in the first sixty pages of this book so that they can identify themselves as an alcoholic or as a heavy drinker. This is about freedom. It's not about membership rights. This is about freedom. You can get free by finding out you're not an alcoholic just like you can get free by finding you are and getting a recovery experience.

What some of us do is when we get a sponsee or somebody who asks us to work with them; we get them over to our house and establish our relationship. One of the aspects of the relationship is they are giving us spiritual consent to be honest with them and they are going to be listening to us more than you're going to be listening to every other person in meetings. We don't want them coming back to us and saying, "Well, you're saying this and Harry's saying that..." If you're asking us to work with you, you're giving us the benefit of the doubt and we will also say where our information comes from. It comes from the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous. If there is anything that we are sharing with them that can't be reconciled somehow with the book, feel free to ignore that but understand that ninety percent of the stuff that's shared in the meetings doesn't come from the book.

It comes from self-help books. It comes from Oprah and Doctor Phil and all kinds of other influences that people have. It comes from therapeutic environments. It comes from treatment. It comes from all over the place. If you want a recovery experience, the best place to find that is in this book. This book's only job is to bring about a state called recovered for the alcoholic. It's very specific so if you suffer from alcoholism, let's get that done. Let's get through these steps. Many newcomers pick up other therapeutic or spiritual literature. We tell them to go at that after you've gotten through the twelve steps, you're sponsoring other people, you've made all of your amends, you're praying and you're meditating, you're being held accountable to a sponsor or a spiritual advisor, you're being completely honest with at least one other

person and you have consistent meeting attendance. If you want to heal your wounded inner child or something after that, go at it, but don't bring that back into the meetings. We don't have any opinion on any outside issues and that's an outside issue.

Someone will come into a meeting and say, "You know I found out that shame is what's my real problem is." If you tell that to somebody who has three days sober, you may be killing them. Because shame is only one symptom of a much larger problem called alcoholism. Yes, they'll relate to shame, but you don't treat one symptom when you have five hundred of them. What you do is you treat the underlying causes and conditions of your illness. There's so many detours and distractions and voices crying in the wilderness to go this direction or that direction, sometimes you're going to go the wrong way. Again, get yourself an experienced responsible spiritual advisor or sponsor if you're going through this process, somebody that's been through this and can save you all of the time of going down all these dead ends that are only going to end in relapse or no significant increase in your quality of life.

Let's talk about the substitute here because they said, "Have you a sufficient substitute?" We relate a lot to this because you've got to give us something. Alcohol was a torturous unrequited type of lover, but lover it was and if you're going to tell us that all we are going to have is sobriety, there's going to come a period of time where that's just not going to be enough for us.

So, *"yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfying years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship and so will you."* These are really significant promises. These are some of the fellowship promises. Let's look at them. You will find release from care, boredom and worry. Finding a release from that is significant. *"Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last"*. You'll have true meaning to your life by engaging in the fellowship. And remember, the fellowship is coming after the program here. They're talking about the fellowship in the last chapter. They're not saying bring them to a meeting in the beginning of Working with Others. They're saying take him through the steps.

So the fellowship is something that should come after the working of the steps. That's not the way it happens today. Most of the time today we're exposed to the fellowship and if we're lucky, we find a recovery process within the fellowship, but that's not how they did it in the beginning.

*"The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead"*. So the happiest years you're going to experience, the most satisfactory years, are going to lie ahead of you. Many of us used to look back on the high school years or the college years and think, "I really had it going on then. I had the women and the friends and the cars and the parties. Now I'm stuck in this room drinking myself to death." But they only lay ahead after the process of the twelve steps.

*"How is that to come about, you ask, where am I to find these people?"* There were two AA groups when the book was written. They expected this book to be mailed all around the country, maybe the world, and for people to find mail order recovery through this book by doing what it tells you to do. So they're explaining where this fellowship is going to come from. *"You are going to meet these new friends in your own community. Near you, alcoholics are dying helplessly like people in a sinking ship. If you live in a large place, there are hundreds. High and low, rich and poor, these are future fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous"*. You're supposed to create your own fellowship by finding people to take through the steps and then engage them in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. That's what this book is telling you to do.

*"Among them you will make lifelong friends. You will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties for you will escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey. Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life. You will learn the full meaning of love thy neighbor as thyself. It may seem incredible that these men are to become happy, respected and useful once more. How can they rise out of such misery, bad repute and hopelessness? The practical answer is that since these things have happened among us, they can happen with you. Should you wish them above all else and be willing to make use of our experience, we are sure they will come. The age of miracles is still with us. Our own recovery proves that. Our hope is that when this ship of a book is launched on the world tide of alcoholism, defeated drinkers will seize upon it to follow its suggestion."*

*"Many, we are sure, will rise to their feet and march on. They will approach still other sick ones and a fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous may spring up in each city and hamlet, havens for those who must find a way out."* This is not how the fellowship grows any more, unfortunately. They expected when this book was launched, when it was published and people started to buy it, defeated drinkers would seize upon it, follow its directions and take the steps. Then they will rise to their feet and march on. They will approach other sick ones and fellowships of Alcoholics Anonymous will spring up in cities and hamlets, and havens for those who must find a way out. Unfortunately, most of the time meetings grow today because of resentments and all it takes is a coffeepot and resentment and you can start a meeting. We don't know of one twelve step group that started because one person was finding people who were still drinking or using, took them through the steps and then created a group out of those people. That's not how it happens any more but we should look back on this and ask ourselves why. Why isn't it happening any more?

There are many reasons today that this process is not followed anymore. Sometimes AA itself is to blame. There's an inter group meeting in one area and because there's a real renaissance going on, most meetings that are starting up are big book meetings. So if there's a new meeting going into the meeting location book, most likely it's a big book meeting and this freaks out a lot of the people in the inter group meetings. They see it as a threat to the status quo, all these big book people. Why aren't there discussion meetings or step meetings starting? All these meetings are big book meetings. They're trying to find ways to not allow them to go into the book and they're trying to find ways to take them out of the book. So, if you're going to stand up for the process in this book, you're almost going to have to fight the service

structures. There are so many inexperienced people who become service representatives. They haven't really gone through the steps. They don't sponsor people through the steps. They don't pray and meditate. They don't have a really strong program, yet they've ended up as a DCM or a trustee or a GSR or an inner group rep. They find people coming from this book very, very threatening. It's a real shame that people who are actually trying to follow the instructions in the basic text of the fellowship get a hard time for doing so or are looked on with suspicion, but that's really the case these days. Some of us have gone through periods of time where we held different service positions and found it incredibly frustrating because there's little or no effort being made to carry the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic. It's more about literature sales. It's more about treasury statements. It's more about GSO wants this or GSO wants that, always something that has to do with fellowship quantity and not quality. It's really frustrating for somebody who is feeling driven to carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic in the way this book tells you to do it. It's one thing to tell your story in a prison or a treatment center. It's a whole 'other thing to do it the way this book tells you to do, which is to find a prospect that is really ill and take them through the steps. The New York influence is negative as far as this book and the processes in this book. Akron less so, and it's always been that way. Akron has always been much more influential as far as the spiritual processes, the steps, God, New York, for the most part, have been not so much God, this book, the steps. It's been more psychological and fellowship driven. We hate to sound negative toward the structure of the fellowship that led us to recovery and that saved our life. But there are inexperienced uninformed people in service positions that can cause a lot of harm. If you look back to the 30s and 40s, nobody got into this fellowship without going through the steps. In this day and age, you're in minority if you actually have step experience or you're a recovered alcoholic. There are misunderstandings that pervade a lot of the groups and a lot of the structure that groups tend to rely on as a support mechanism, unfortunately. There are exceptions to this rule and there are areas that are strong. And there are areas that are really weak. The best thing we can do is gain our own experience with the steps and then to carry that message however it's appropriate and to create the fellowship we crave.

## A Vision For You 2

"In the chapter Working With Others, you gathered an idea of how we approach and aid others to health." Time and time again in this book, it explains that the approach to helping the alcoholic is in the step process. You really probably wouldn't know it going to a lot of the twelve step fellowships today; but that's what the recovery process is all about. It almost seems like the process today is about discussing things, about getting current with people, learning how to share in meetings, all of which is important and good but it's not a treatment for alcoholism. In the chapter Working with Others, they were very specific, there was over a hundred instructions in how to work with another alcoholic, how to help another alcoholic. And rarely was there an instruction to drag them to a meeting or tell them to get current with everybody in the group.

One of the things that would happen was, that if you were serious, if they saw that you were serious about getting over drinking, that meant that you were doing a lot of step work. And if you were doing a lot of step work, they would pull you into the fold. And a lot of the meetings back then you would see the format consist of talking about how to help other people. That's what the first meetings were about. They would get together and discuss where they can find more prospects, where they can find more people to help. Very different than the meetings of today and there should be some difference in the meetings. They were learning early on, but many of us are very concerned about how far away from the actual process of the twelve steps that are laid out in this book some meetings and some fellowships have come.

"Suppose now that through you, several families have adopted this way of life..." What way of life? The way of the steps and of helping other people. "You will want to know more of how to proceed from that point. Perhaps the best way of treating you to a glimpse of your future would be to describe the growth of the fellowship among us. Here is a brief account. Years ago, in 1935, one of our number made a journey to a certain western city..." This would be Bill's trip out to Akron to try to take over the tire company. "From a business standpoint, his trip came off badly." His temporary partners left him there with no money, very disgruntled that the whole deal had blown up in their face.

"Had he been successful in his enterprise, he would have been set on his feet financially, which at the time seemed vitally important." He was positioning himself to become president of that tire company by doing a stock proxy fight. Thank God that Bill Wilson did not become the president of one more tire company in Akron. He may not have had time to detail the recovery process in this book if he had. "But his venture would up in a lawsuit and bogged down completely. The proceeding was shot through with much hard feeling and controversy. Bitterly discouraged, he found himself in a strange place, discredited and almost broke. Still physically weak and sober but a few months, he saw that his predicament was dangerous. He wanted so much to talk with someone, but whom?"

Imagine this, he was sober about five months or so. The whole thing blew up in his face. He didn't have enough money to get home. One more time his plans and designs ended up in a nightmare. His self-esteem was tied into this. His reputation was tied into this. And here he is in a strange city with a couple of dollars left in his pocket, not enough to get home, completely dejected. Relapse can very well be imminent in situations like this.

In the book in other places, it says that if your spiritual house is not in order you then can't deal with certain trials or low spots ahead. You're not going to be able to maneuver your way through them, and this would have been one of those occasions. "One dismal afternoon, he paced the hotel lobby wondering how his hotel bill was to be paid." "At one end of the room stood a glass-covered directory of local churches. Down the lobby a door opened into an attractive bar. He

could see the gay crowd inside. In there he would find companionship and release. Unless he took some drinks, he might not have the courage to scrape up an acquaintance and he would have a lonely weekend. Of course he couldn't drink, but why not sit hopefully at a table, a bottle of ginger ale before him? After all, had he not been sober six months now? Perhaps he could handle, say, three drinks, no more. Fear gripped him. He was on thin ice. Again, it was the old insidious insanity, that first drink. With a shiver, he turned away and walked down the lobby to the church directory. Music and gay chatter still floated to him from the bar." That turn, where he turned away from the bar and headed back to the church directory and the pay phone is a very pivotal moment.

Alcoholics Anonymous, a lot of people's sobriety and recovery hang on seconds and inches, little defining moments that if they'd gone the other way would have changed things forever and that was certainly one of them. But we believe he had done enough work with other alcoholics, he had done an initial run through the steps and he was continuing to work with other alcoholics when he was in New York. He was in fit spiritual condition. If he was not in fit spiritual condition, he would have turned toward the bar.

"But what about his responsibilities? His family and the men who would die because they would not know how to get well. Ah, yes, those are other alcoholics. There must be many such in this town. He would phone a clergyman. His sanity returned and he thanked God. Selecting a church at random from the directory, he stepped into a booth and lifted the receiver." On that directory was a list of the churches and phone numbers, probably twelve different churches were on that plaque on the wall. And he had a bunch of nickels that he had gotten from the bar, and he started dropping nickels into the phone and dialing these numbers, and literally he would say is, "Hi, Father Flanagan. My name is Bill. I'm a rummy from New York and I want to talk to another rummy." And time after time, all he heard was a dial tone. These people were hanging up on him.

He finally got a hold of Walter Tunks. Reverend Tunks was in a prayer group with Henrietta Siberling and Ann Smith. They were all in the Oxford Group and he understood a little bit about the spiritual process and he understood that through this Oxford Group many people were getting better, drunks included. Bob Smith was actually in Walter Tunks' prayer group at this time. So instead of Walter Tunks thinking this is a crackpot and hang up, what he said was, "Explain yourself a little bit." And Bill talked about how he was staying sober by helping other alcoholics, and Tunks goes, "Well, I'll tell you what...let me give you a number of someone." And he gave Bill the number of Henrietta Siberling. Henrietta Siberling was very close to Ann Smith, Doctor Bob's wife, and she got a call from Bill that night. They tried to arrange for Bill to come right over to meet with Doctor Bob that night but he was too drunk. It had to be the next morning. Now, why was a call like this accepted? If you got a call from a drunk who wants to talk to another drunk, there would usually be a little bit of resistance taking it seriously or paying a lot of attention to it. But what had happened was in this prayer group with Walter Tunks, Henrietta Siberling and Anne Smith, had started to pray for Doctor Bob's recovery from alcohol. They would do prayer groups and pray that something or someone would be able to help Doctor Bob. And all of a sudden, here's this phone call from a rummy from New York who has a cure for alcoholism and he needs to talk to another rummy. Do you know anybody? What they said, instead of saying there's a crackpot and hanging up the phone, they were thinking, "What took this guy so long to call? We've been praying for months."

"His call to the clergyman led him presently to a certain resident of the town who, though formerly able and respected, was then nearing the nadir of alcoholic despair." That was Doctor Bob. "It was the usual situation...home in jeopardy, wife ill, children distracted, bills in arrears and standing damage. He had a desperate desire to stop but saw no way out for he had earnestly tried many avenues of escape." Remember, he was a doctor. He was trying as many medical solutions as there were at that time.

"Painfully aware of being somehow abnormal, the man did not fully realize what it meant to be alcoholic." Again, here is an amazing thing. A failed stock shyster comes out to Akron, Ohio, and gives a medical doctor – a surgeon – the medical estimate of what alcoholism was, because he was bringing it from Doctor Silkworth. So again, very unusual that Doctor Bob would be listening to a medical estimate from a stock broker. "When our friend related his experience, the man agreed that no amount of willpower he might muster could stop his drinking for long." That is the problem with alcoholism that's really misunderstood. It's misunderstood by everybody. People continue to believe that if only we really wanted to not drink, we could.

These two guys, looking in each other's eyes, understood that they were sitting in front of somebody else that understood. "A spiritual experienced he conceded was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high upon the basis suggested." Bill was following the process in the chapter Working With Others. You talk about your own drinking. Then you talk about how desperate you were to stop. And then you talk about how you were exposed to the step process, the spiritual exercises of the steps and how they brought on a spiritual awakening and enabled you to become recovered from alcoholism. And this is what Bill was sharing with Doctor Bob and Doctor Bob was saying, "Sure, I understand a spiritual experience, but some of the things that you're telling me you did, I just can't do." Mainly, it was the ninth step, it was making amends. Doctor Bob just didn't feel enough spiritual fortitude at that point in time to actually go around and make direct amends to people. Remember he was a shaken shattered wreck. It's very difficult for people to think they have the power to go around town, knocking on doors, making direct amends. And usually it's because they don't have the power right then and there. The power comes when you start moving through these steps.

"He told how he lived in constant worry about those who might find out about his alcoholism. He had of course the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of his drinking." A lot of people knew about his drinking, he was losing his surgical practice because of that. "Why, he argued, should he lose the remainder of his business only to bring still more suffering to his family by foolishly admitting his plight to people from whom he made his livelihood?" Doctor Bob was a

proctologist and he was afraid that if he told his patients he was an alcoholic, there wouldn't be too many more proctors that he would be able to work on.

"He would do anything, he said, but that. Intrigued however, he invited our friend to his home. Sometime later and just as he thought he was getting control of his liquor situation, he went on a roaring bender. For him, this was the spree that ended all sprees. He saw that he would have to face his problem squarely, and that God might give him mastery." Doctor Bob had to go to Atlantic City for his annual medical convention. He did it every year. He said, "all this recovery stuff is very, very important, but I need to go to my convention". And that happens today when you're sponsoring people and they need to go tour with the Grateful Dead or something. Or "I always go to Aruba for spring break". They have this idea that they need to do something and that something is gonna be very dangerous for their sobriety, especially if they haven't gone through the steps. That's what happened with Bob. He got on a train to Atlantic City. He got drunk on the train, three days later the train conductors got him back to Akron, called up his secretary and she came down and they poured him off the train. We don't even think he got to Atlantic City.

"One morning, he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business. At midnight, he came home exhausted but very happy. He has not had a drink since." This is pretty important. The one part of the program that Doctor Bob would not do was the ninth step. He was okay with everything else. And he ended up getting drunk. And we have seen that happen with other alcoholics. We see them stop at step eight or step nine and get drunk. That is what is supposed to happen if you're an alcoholic. You're supposed to get drunk if you're not ready to right, to the best of your ability, the wrongs that you've caused in the past. It's important for your connection to God to have done right by the rest of God's children. It's a spiritual principle, and what happened was when he got poured off of that train and he started to detox, he had an operation that he could not postpone. There were no other surgeons that could do it or he probably would have gotten thrown out of the hospital, kicked off the surgical staff. So Bill and Ann got him to the hospital. Bill gave him three bottles of beer, gave him a couple of downers or whatever kind of benzodiazepines that they had at the time, put his gown on him, put the gloves on him and the mask, and shoved him through the door. Get in there and go do that operation on that poor unsuspecting person in the harness straps. As soon as he was done with that operation, he didn't go back out and see Bill and Ann. What he did was he headed for his car and he realized that to stop this nightmare of a life he has, he needs to go make amends. He went up one side of the street and down the other. And he admitted his harms. He asked them, "What do I need to do to make this right?" He did what you're supposed to do on amends. And when he came back, it was late at night. He was exhausted. He had lived in that one town and most of his harms had been in that town, so he could really knock the amends out in a short amount of time. He got back and he was exhausted and he never drank again.

Some religions tell us, "Straighten out those problems with your fellow man and then you can come to the altar. Then you can come to the Father". Most religious traditions, most good philosophies, will contend that we need to reduce the amount of guilt, shame and remorse that we have inside of us to be able to comfortably move through life. We believe that when you go out and you make direct amends, there's nothing that will put more muscle into your recovery than that. It makes you strong and it makes you clear and it gets rid of a lot of the things that block you off from a clear connection and a relationship to God.

We know someone who's a doctor and not only is he a doctor, he's in a twelve step organization. He's in charge of detoxing a ton of people but he understands that detoxing is only the beginning of a continuum that's going to lead to long-term recovery. He said that the statistics on twenty-eight day treatment are somewhere around three percent stay sober five years. He says the statistics on people in AA who do a fifth step are fifty percent stay sober five years. We would be willing to bet you ninety-five percent of the people who have gone out and made their amends are going to stay sober five years.

Certain things work against addictive illness and certain things don't. If we suffer from addictive illness, we need to pay attention to the things that work. If we care about our lives or the lives of others, we need to get about the business of doing those things that really work, however illogical or irregardless of whether there's a peer reviewed efficacy study that's been done on these processes. We need to pay attention to what has worked for the most people and do it. That's the only responsible way to survive and not cause more harm and misery in your family.

We really wish that addiction academics would have done really critical studies of chronic alcoholics who engaged in this process. It's just not something you're going to see much of because there would be no upside to find out a spiritual process works better than a medical one. What hospital or treatment center would want to find out definitively that no human power could help us but God can and will if found? There's no process of recovery or treatment of alcoholism out there, that's as effective as someone who is willing to do all the steps and work with others.

Now where there's a lot of argument in the treatment and recovery field is, what do you do about the people who are not willing to do these steps? What if they continue to be unconvinced at a level that's just so deep that they will not engage in this? They cannot come to the conclusion that this is what they need to do to recover. Should you abandon them? We don't think that they should be abandoned, but what are you going to do about the people who are unwilling to completely give themselves to this simple program? We're talking about the people who can and will completely give themselves to this simple program and those people are going to be fine. The people who are unwilling for whatever reason, they cannot or will not give themselves to this program, there's a whole lot of treatment options that's out there for them. There are multiple treatment experiences. There's medication maintenance, there's lobotomies, there's insane asylums. There

are all kinds of harm reduction; there are all kinds of processes that are going to be put in front of these people. But the best deal on the planet for the alcoholic is what's in this book.

"As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four. Though life was not easy for the two friends, plenty of difficulties presented themselves. Both saw that they must keep spiritually active." We must keep spiritually active to remain sober and recovered. "One day they called up the head nurse of a local hospital. They explained their need and inquired if she had a first-class alcoholic prospect." Doctor Bob went into the hospital and started asking about alcoholic patients. Because he was a proctologist, they were going, "What do you want to know about them for?" And the head nurse basically asked, "Doctor Bob, why do you care about alcoholics?" He goes, "I think we've found a cure for alcoholism." And the nurse looked at him and said, "Have you tried it on yourself?" He had no idea she even knew he drank. "She replied, 'Yes, we've got a corker. He has just beaten up a couple of nurses, goes off his head completely when he's drinking but he's a grand chap when he is sober, though he's been in here eight times in the last six months. Understand, he was once a well-known lawyer in town but just now, we've got him strapped down tight.'"

This was Bill Dotson a chronic, hopeless, low-bottom alcoholic. He would go on these tears and get more and more violent in drunken blackouts. He actually blackened the eyes of a nurse and when he came to, he was strapped down. He was in four point restraints. And imagine how horrible you feel when you find out that you've beaten up a nurse and now you're strapped down in a hospital where that nurse works. The amount of shame and remorse that this guy must have been feeling is beyond belief.

"It was a prospect all right, but by the description, none too promising. The use of spiritual principles in such cases was not so well understood as it is now". "Put him in a private room. We'll be down." No one got a private room until they were about to die. They figured that the private rooms were for the patients who deserved the dignity of dying with just their family, not in a crowded room. So when they put this guy in a private room, he thought he was dying. He was quite concerned about it.

"Two days later, a future fellow of Alcoholics Anonymous stared glassily at the strangers beside his bed. 'Who are you fellows and why this private room? I was always in a ward before.' Said one of the visitors, 'We're giving you a treatment for alcoholism.'" That's what they called the step process. "Hopelessness was written large on this man's face as he replied, 'Oh, but that's no use. Nothing would fix me. I'm a goner. The last three times I got drunk on the way home from here. I'm afraid to go out the door. I can't understand it.' For an hour, the two friends told about their drinking experiences. Over and over he would say, 'That's me. That's me. I drink like that.'" This is a beautiful example of a twelve step call. You need for the other person to identify with you, so you talk about your drinking experiences, about the obsession of the mind, about the allergy of the body, about how the unmanageability manifested in their lives and the problems that alcoholism caused. That's what Bill and Bob were doing.

"The man in the bed was told of the acute poisoning from which he suffered, how it deteriorates the body of the alcoholic and warps his mind." The obsession of the mind, the allergy of the body...."There was much talk about the mental state preceding the first drink." This is sometimes where we screw up, when we're doing a twelve step call. We just talk about the war stories. We need to talk about that strange mental state that precedes the first drink because that's the obsession of the mind and that's the hard part for us to understand. Even into our last days of drinking, we really think we are the ones making the decision to drink. We don't know that we lack the power, choice and control to not drink. So that needs to be hammered home whenever we're doing twelve step calls. We need to show from our own experience how that obsession of the mind manifests.

Each of us has our own stories about how we drank at the worst time, the worst circumstance with the worst consequences looming right at us, we still drank. And that's a picture of the obsession of the mind. This is so important to explain to a drunk. Even in meetings today you rarely hear this mentioned.

Because a lot of bad treatment centers were churning people out in the 70s, 80s and 90s where they were told that they could prevent their own relapse by having relapse prevention training and they were told to avoid people, places and things to protect you from picking up the drink. They were being sold the line that they actually had the capacity to make a choice to drink or not drink. And sometimes the alcoholic can. The problem is sometimes they can't. So by telling somebody that you need to rely on making the right choice, you're handing them the wrong tool. It's not going to get the job done. There are so many people with bad information that wander around all the different twelve step fellowships today that you really have to be discerning in who you listen to.

Because it's quite possible a large percent of the people in your meeting are heavy drinkers. They're not alcoholics. They can put the plug in the jug. But the definition of an alcoholic is the person who can't and a lot of times they do get shame and they do get looked on as they're losers. They're not losers. They're ill. And if they can't find some kind of solace in the organization that was developed to help them specifically, then that's a really sad state of affairs.

What we should do is find the people that really need help and work with them. Offer them a way out and then when you're done with them, you don't own them. You tell them to go out and do likewise with others. And then you keep this moving forward. If we do this we can impact a large group of people who will die otherwise. That's the process in this book. Unfortunately all the twelve step fellowships have morphed into this bizarre self-help group therapy thing, and the recovery statistics have plummeted because of it.

The Grapevine magazine published an article in 2009 where they actually did a study on sober time. This did not just include AA. This was a lot of different twelve step fellowships audited in this. They went around to a lot of them, did surveys outside of the meetings and came to the conclusion that forty-five percent of the people attending these

fellowships had been sober less than thirty days.

That's horrific. When this book says rarely have we seen a person fail, then it talks about seventy-five percent permanent recovery rate for people who really try, something's gone wrong in a big way. And it seems there's no help coming from GSO in New York. The decisions that get made in the central office many times go against what is in this book and how these people were successful in the early days. They're more about promoting what everybody wants in these meetings these days. Whatever the group conscience wants, your group can do whatever it thinks best. There is no concern that so many non-alcoholics are in the mix, watering down the effectiveness of the fellowship and steps. So we should not expect any help from the upper echelons of GSO in New York to try to get things back on track. The only thing that's going to get it back on track is the renaissance that's going on in a lot of the twelve step fellowships, getting back to the basics of this book. That's the only thing that's going to help and that's going to improve survivability for the alcoholic or the drug addict.

*'Yes, that's me,' said the sick man. 'The very image...you fellows know your stuff, all right, but I don't see what good it will do. You fellows are somebody. I was once but I'm a nobody now. From what you tell me, I know more than ever I can't stop.' At this, both the visitors burst into laugh. Said the future fellow, 'Damn little to laugh about that I can see.' The two friends spoke of their spiritual experience and told him about the course of action they carried out.'* What's the course of action, the steps.

*"He interrupted, 'I used to be strong for the church but that won't fix it. I've prayed to God on hangover mornings and sworn that I'd never touch another drop but by nine o'clock, I'd be boiled as an owl.' Next day found the prospect more receptive. He'd been thinking it over. 'Maybe you're right,' he said. 'God ought to be able to do anything.' Then he added, 'He sure didn't do much for me when I was trying to fight this booze racket alone.' On the third day, the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his creator."* Step three. *"And said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary."* Four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve..."*His wife came scarcely daring to be hopeful though she thought she saw something different about her husband already. He had begun to have a spiritual experience.* Right there on the detox bed on day three, he started to have a spiritual experience. That happens when willingness comes, that's the beginning of the spiritual experience. *"That afternoon, he put on his clothes and walked from the hospital a free man. He entered a political campaign, making speeches, frequenting men's gatherings, places of all sorts, often staying up all night. He lost the race by only a narrow margin, but he found God and in finding God, he found himself."* That's an interesting paragraph, too. You have to understand, he was also working with other alcoholics. He stuck with Bill and Bob until the end of his days. He stuck with the Alcoholics Anonymous crew. On many nights, he went out trying to help other alcoholics. So he'd gone through the steps and he was trying to help other alcoholics, but he also thought he should run for mayor.

So much for no major changes in the first year, they didn't care about that back then. They thought, "All right. You got God by your side. God bless you. Just remember you need to continue to work with other alcoholics and pray and meditate on a regular basis and meet with us. *"That was in June 1935. He never drank again. He too has become a respected and useful member of his community. He has helped other men recover and is a power in the church from which he was long absent. So you see, there were three alcoholics in that town who now felt they had to give to others what they had found or be sunk. After several failures to find others, a fourth turned up. He came through an acquaintance who had heard the good news. He proved to be a devil-may-care young fellow whose parents could not make out whether he wanted to stop drinking or not. They were deeply religious people, much shocked by their son's refusal to have anything to do with the church. He suffered horribly from his sprees but it seemed as if nothing could be done for him. He consented, however, to go to the hospital where he occupied the very room recently vacated by the lawyer. He had three visitors. After a bit, he said, 'The way you folks put the spiritual stuff makes sense. I'm ready to do business. I guess the old folks were right after all.'* So one more was added to the fellowship. All this time our friend of the hotel lobby incident remained in that town. He was there three months. He now returned home, leaving behind his first acquaintance..." Doctor Bob..."the lawyer..." Bill Dotson..."and the devil-may-care chap. These men have found something brand new in life. Though they knew they must help other alcoholics if they would remain sober, that motive became secondary. It was transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves for others. They shared their homes, their slender resources and gladly devoted their spare hours to fellow sufferers."

We wonder how many people in the twelve step fellowships are doing that today. *"They were willing, by day or night, to place a new man in the hospital and visit him afterward. They grew in numbers. They experienced a few distressing failures, but in those cases, they made an effort to bring the man's family into a spiritual way of living, thus relieving much worry and suffering. A year and six months later, these three had succeeded with seven more. Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone's home did not shelter a little gathering of men and women. Happy in their release and constantly thinking of how they might present their discovery to some newcomer."* That's what it was about, helping others, it wasn't about going there like it was a spiritual gas station to fill up. It was more about going there to figure out how to give back.

"In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone or everyone interested in a spiritual way of life. Aside from fellowship and sociability, the prime object was to provide a time and a place where new people might bring their problems." This is a misunderstood paragraph. Set aside one night a week where anyone and everyone can come and newcomers can share their problems. Unfortunately some of the twelve step fellowships set aside seven nights a week where newcomers can bring their problems. You should share the problem with your sponsor or spiritual advisor and then you share the solution at the meeting. That's the right

way to do it. All problems can be solved by one simple thing in these fellowships, strong sponsorship. If you have a sponsor, the sponsor should share with you what's appropriate to share at the meetings.: They should be giving you some guidance on that. The people who just love to hear themselves talk, there's a lot of people like that there's the people who talk about their VA recovery program and their PTSD stuff and there's people who will just share and share and share and share, because they think sharing is helping them. What they really need is strong sponsorship, they need strong guidance. A group leader needs to take responsibility when it gets off track. One of the things we think that's appropriate in this kind of case is to directly ask that person, "Do you have a sponsor? Do you have someone that you're working with?" right after they're done sharing. And if they say now, say, "Well, look, most of what you're talking about can be solved by good sponsorship. I would recommend that you get a sponsor." There may be other ways to do it more delicately, more compassionately but to allow a meeting to get sidetracked into nonsense does no one any good.

*"Outsiders became interested. One man and his wife placed their large home at the disposal of this strangely assorted crowd."* That's T. Henry and Clarice Williams. *"This couple has since become so fascinated that they have dedicated their home to the work. Many a distracted wife has visited this house to find loving and understanding companionship among women who knew her problem, to hear from the lips of their husbands what had happened to them, to be advised how her own wayward mate might be hospitalized and approached when next he stumbled."* That was the origins of the AL Anon family systems.

*"Many a man yet dazed from his hospital experience has stepped over the threshold of that home into freedom. Many an alcoholic who entered there came away with an answer. He succumbed to that gay crowd inside who laughed at their own misfortunes and understood his. Impressed by those who visited him at the hospital, he capitulated entirely when later, in an upper room in his house, he heard the story of some man whose experience closely tallied with his own."*

That's a fifth step experience. There's something great about visiting somebody in the hospital. They liked to do that back then. Even if you didn't need to be detoxed, they would put you in a hospital because they had you in a controlled environment. Then they would bring in the people to do their twelve step calls. That usually results in the person feeling obligated enough to you, because you went and visited them, to start coming around and to start working with you. It's not always a hundred percent effective, but it's much better than to give somebody a meeting book and phone numbers.

*"The expression on the faces of the women, the indefinable something in the eyes of the men, the stimulating and electric atmosphere of the place conspired to let him know that here was haven at last. The very practical approach to his problems, the absence of intolerance of any kind, the informality, the genuine democracy, the uncanny understanding which these people had was irresistible. He and his wife would leave elated with the thought of what they could now do for some stricken acquaintance and his family. They knew they had a host of new friends. It seemed they had known these strangers always. They had seen miracles and one was to come to them. They had visioned the great reality...their loving and all-powerful creator."* Remember that the healing that these people experienced related it as the direct result of an all-loving and all-powerful creator. That's how they explained this miracle. And it's the way we continue to explain it in twelve step fellowship.

Then they talked about their spiritual recovery process and the experience they've had with that, that's basically what they did. Was there a little bit of informality about that? Were there some jokesters and was there some people that were heavily religious and was there some people that were a little bit more psychological and were their different people? Yes, absolutely, but for the most part this is what those gatherings looked like. People were sharing their experience, their strength and their hope. They were sharing what it was like, what happened and what it's like today. We think we can take some lessons from that. So often when you go into a speaker meeting in any fellowship, what you hear is what it was like, what it was like, what it was like. You don't hear what it was like, what happened and what it's like today. You basically hear forty minutes of drunk-alogue and then, "And then I got sober. Thank you." And the meeting's over. That's not a good way to balance out sharing your recovery experience.

*"Now this house will hardly accommodate its weekly visitors, for they number sixty or eighty as a rule. Alcoholics are being attracted from far and near. From surrounding towns, families driving long distances to be present."* People were coming down from Cleveland. *"A community thirty miles away has fifteen fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. Being a large place, we think that someday its fellowship will number many hundreds."* That happened very soon. The Cleveland group exploded. The Cleveland group really taught people how to become involved. Clarence Snyder and his Cleveland boys, got about the business of getting out there and sharing the message. They put ads in the paper..."Got a drinking problem? Call Clarence." They really got busy in a big way and accomplished a lot. Hundreds of people were in the Cleveland group in a very short period of time.

*"But life among Alcoholics Anonymous is more than attending gatherings and visiting hospitals. Cleaning up old scrapes, helping to settle family differences explaining the disinherited son to his irate parents, lending money and securing jobs for each other when justified...these are everyday occurrences. No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially if he means business."* That is a qualifier there, if he means business. And what do they mean by that? They mean was this individual willing to do the twelve steps? If he wasn't, he did not mean business and he was not welcomed.

This is where the tradition came in that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking. It used to be an honest desire to stop drinking. It used to mean if they meant business. We think its right and well to open the doors as wide as possible. We would rather have five people show up that doesn't belong than to lose one person that does. But we also think it's important for us to understand the origins of this whole process. You really do need to mean business to

be able to recover. You cannot recover sitting in a chair. You cannot recover sharing. You cannot recover making coffee. You cannot recover going on speaking commitments. That's not how you recover. You can stay sober that way if you're lucky, but you need to mean business to recover. You need to be like Doctor Bob, washing his hands from the operation, getting in his car and going up one side of the street and down the other making amends. That's the type of "mean business" that they were talking about back then.

### A Vision for You 3

*"No one was too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially into the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous if he means business."* There was no one that they would not let into the fellowship as long as they meant business. Now what did they mean by if he means business? They simply meant is he willing to follow directions. If you're willing to follow directions, willing to start writing inventory, willing to share it, willing to make a demonstration that you were going to turn your will and your life over to the care of God, willing to go out and make amends, willing to pray and meditate on a daily basis, and whether you were willing to work with other people. If you weren't willing to do any of those things, they didn't consider that you meant business and you weren't welcomed cordially. You were told to go ahead and try it your way, we will be here if you come back ready to submit to this program.

. Some of the early meetings actually had bouncers. They really didn't want anybody wandering in. It was a later manifestation when the twelve step fellowships began to allow just about anybody to come in and not be held accountable to working the twelve steps. They now have the same right as anybody else to be in the meeting and sit in the back and sit in the back, share, *complain* and never do anything to get better. That was a later change to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and for good or for bad. We think it's good that for people who really don't understand how much trouble they're to get a chance to wander in and sometimes they catch alcoholism and get enthused to work a program. But unfortunately, what really happens a lot is people come in and never really get better because they never work a recovery program. They work a fellowship and the fellowship just keeps them stagnantly sober at best, continually relapsing at worst.

*"Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies, these are laughed out of continents, being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others. The things which mattered so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?"* Bill uses these examples, being wrecked in the same lifeboat and really, that's us. It talks here a about the shift in perspective, the shift in perception that really is the awakened spirit of the twelfth step. We're being restored and united under God with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others. The things which mattered so much to some people no longer signify much to them or to us.

*"Under only slightly different conditions, the same thing is taking place in many eastern cities. In one of these, there was a well-known hospital for the treatment of alcoholic and drug addiction." This would be Townes Hospital. "Six years ago, one of our Members was a patient there. Many of us have felt for the first time the presence and power of God within its walls. We are greatly indebted to the doctor in attendance there for, although it might prejudice his own work, has told us of his own belief in ours."*

When you go back to the Doctor's Opinion in the beginning of the book, it's absolutely amazing that he wrote what he wrote. He was supposedly the expert on addiction treatment and alcoholism treatment and basically he was saying, "I really can't offer alcoholics a recovery but these guys that are standing on the soapbox proclaiming Jesus is Lord and running around trying to help other alcoholics, they've got something that works." It really is kind of amazing but that's what he did.

*"Every few days this doctor suggests our approach to one of his patients. Understanding our work he can do this with an eye to selecting those who are willing and able to recover on a spiritual basis." Who would be the ones that are willing and able to recover on a spiritual basis? It's the people that can and will give themselves to this simple program. Those are the people who are willing and able to recover on a spiritual basis. "Many of us former patients go there to help. Then in this eastern city, there are informal meetings such as we have described to you where you may now see scores of members. There are the same fast friendships. There is the same helpfulness to one another as you find among our western friends. There is a good bit of travel between the east and west and we foresee a great increase in this helpful interchange."*

Maybe in 1939 there was some helpful interchange between New York and Akron but that kind of broke down there. There really became a rivalry between New York and Akron and when the Cleveland group started up, it even got worse between Cleveland and New York. When you start really digging into the history of early AA, the letter writing and what was going on between Hank Parkhurst and Henrietta Siberling and Clarence Snyder, and all these people, you really see that it's amazing that the unity of these groups were able to maintain themselves and AA didn't blow up because of personalities over principles. A lot of the in-fighting and rivalries between Cleveland, Akron and New York led Bill to believe that he needed to codify the traditions to keep these things from negatively effecting AA.

When you look at the traditions and you look at some of the concepts, you'll see that the consciousness of God is invoked in these principles. In other words, the group conscience is a direct reflection of the consciousness of God, was what Bill says in some of the tradition material.

We have seen groups blow up. We have been part of groups that have exploded. There will be a power driver over here

or there will be somebody that wants the direction of the meeting to go different over there. We have been part of groups that one day there was a hundred and twenty people there, the next day there was four because of hostile group conscience meetings and people who wanted to use the traditions as weapons. Instead they should have been used to inform them of the best ways to operate at a group level. This book was really written about the reliance upon God; the reliance upon group's power to keep someone sober came later and has proven to be much less effective.

There is no doubt that the book Alcoholics Anonymous informs all types of addiction and alcoholism recovery as well as obsessive-compulsive disorder recovery. We also agree with the theory of the traditions, the point of each of the traditions. We believe very strongly in what those traditions are trying to protect. However, I some of us really believe it's time to rewrite them. In this day and age with the tradition for the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking, that's really misleading and you really have to dig deeply into that tradition to really see that Alcoholics Anonymous is for alcoholics. This is inherent in the tradition but short forms that are read at meetings leads one to believe that if someone declares they have a desire to stop drinking they can be a member.

It's not written specifically covering that very well, you get people who don't think Alcoholics Anonymous is only for alcoholics. They think it's for drug addicts and anybody and everybody that wants to come in and have a desire not to drink. So we really think that that needs to be rewritten. We think that the eleventh and twelfth traditions need to be rewritten, not because anonymity is not the spiritual foundation of our fellowship, not because anonymity and a sense of humility is very important for personal recovery, but because the language in those traditions allow so many people to believe that anonymity means secrecy. A cursory reading of these traditions lead people to believe if they get sober, they should never admit they are alcoholics and go underground. And if anything would possibly lead somebody to believe that once they get sober, they should go underground and not tell anybody they're now sober and recovered, it is a very bad thing.

We are not saying that the traditions themselves are bad. We're saying that the language and the way those traditions were written in the Twelve and Twelve, the long form, the short form, needs to be rewritten because way too many people are dying today. So few people actually stand up and say, "I went to treatment in 1982. "I went to a twelve step fellowship and I got sober. Twelve step fellowships work. You don't have to live like that any more." And instead of doing that, they're staying underground and they don't want to tell anybody that they're sober. They don't want to tell anybody that they've recovered. If you go silent after you have recovered that leads to the belief that AA does not work and people just don't get sober. Few people think that the twelve steps work. That may be a controversial statement and we doubt very much that Alcoholics Anonymous will show the foresight or the ability to have the right kind of meetings to be able to actually rewrite the traditions in language more effective and more responsible to the fellowship and to the problems of stigma and discrimination we suffer from today. We doubt very much that will happen but we really do believe that it should.

At least three traditions were not well-written to address the problems that were going to come fifty, sixty years out. He was writing for a period of time in the last 40s where Alcoholics Anonymous was a much different thing than it is today. The language in the tradition for membership and the language in the tradition for anonymity are not well laid out for what our responsibility as recovered alcoholics really should be, or who should be in the meetings, who Alcoholics Anonymous is for. They allow way too much ambiguity. Do we believe in the traditions? Yes, absolutely, we believe that the only desire for membership should be a desire to not drink once you've qualified yourself as an alcoholic. We believe that in press, radio and film one should remain anonymous and never speak personally for alcoholics anonymous.

We would rather there be five people in the meeting that don't belong there than to lose one person that does. However, there are way too many groups where well-intentioned professionals decide to dump people into the meetings because it's a great place to put them. There will be drug treatment programs where there will be the crack wing and the opiate wing and there will be the post traumatic stress people from the VA's and they will be looking around for places to put people and it's just real easy to decide to drive them to the local AA meeting, And you ask yourself, "Well, why are they taking the addicts to the AA meeting? Why are they doing that?" Well, it's because they only have one van.

There is a lot of ambiguity in the traditions that allows this. When you have a lot of people in the meetings who are new, who really aren't alcoholics, it's going to slowly erode and deteriorate that meeting and all the people with recovery are going to leave. There will be some people that still want to stay there and help the newcomers, but if all the newcomers are not alcoholic, then they're not going to want to stay there. They will not be able to fulfill their primary purpose, to carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. Because the way this particular tradition is written, it allows for this confusion. They're telling them, "Just identify yourself as an alcoholic". Or "just announce that you have a desire to stop drinking and nobody can kick you out." It's a total misunderstanding of the true nature of that particular tradition. In the early days, they made sure you were an alcoholic and they made sure you were going to mean business and go through the steps or you weren't allowed into the meeting. This improved the quality of the meeting and the power of the message.

The most important thing I think that you can learn when you come into a twelve step fellowship is the truth about your own first step. What is your truth? And it's not going to be a bad thing if you find out you're not really an alcoholic. It will mean that you may not have a progressively fatal illness. That's actually going to be a good thing because then you've got more options in front of you. You may find that you belong in another fellowship that will work better for you because there will be people with experience that you can relate to.

What do you have an obsession over? What do you have a physical craving over? Wherein lies the unmanageability and how does that wrap around the addiction or the alcoholism. You need to be offered the dignity of that information and not told things like, "Kid, nobody ever gets in here by mistake." The fact is a large percent of the people that show up in AA

are there by mistake. To a degree AA is like a self-cleaning oven. The stuff that doesn't belong is going to burn off after awhile but there are a lot of people that get there by mistake. So the first thing an informed sponsor or an informed spiritual advisor should do is help you identify what your powerless over. If you're one of these sponsors or spiritual advisors that never qualify someone to find out that you have a heavy drinker you're doing it wrong. Many of us find that out when we are working with people all the time.

Sometimes we find that we have a heavy drinker who is more of a drug addict than an alcoholic. We don't want anybody to think that there should be twelve step police, people that run around and decide who belongs and who doesn't belong. With the right guidance from an informed member you'll figure out whether you belong or not and what to do. You don't need people kicking you out. But the fact of the matter is that the AA twelve step fellowship has a primary purpose. The primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve recovery. When that primary purpose is paramount then you're going to have a healthy fellowship. When it's not, you're not going to.

We have been around enough twelve step support groups to see what happens when groups don't care about the primary purpose. So we believe some of the languages in a few of the traditions need to be rewritten to make clear the things that those traditions really do stand for and the things that they don't stand for. Certainly anything that allows a recovered alcoholic to believe that they should stay quiet about their recovery is a horrible thing. It's also very bad to except someone with a different addiction to stay in AA because they will be better able to recover when they are in a group with similar experiences and working with others who suffer from what they have. If the language in the last two traditions lead people to believe that they can be members and not suffer from alcoholism, then there needs to be language that tells them that that's not so.

In the practical application of the anonymity traditions, what you're not supposed to do is to admit membership in any twelve step fellowship or say that you speak for it with your picture or your last name in that piece of media. Yet people believe that it's Alcoholics Anonymous and we must be anonymous. And that's as far from the truth as can be. To be truly helpful to the still sick and suffering alcoholic it needs to be communicated that AA works and recovery is possible, you just need to respect the media policies. You do not have to stay silent.

*“Someday we hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find a fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at this destination. To some extent this is already true. Some of us are salesmen and go about, little clusters of twos and threes and fives of us have sprung up in other communities through contact with our two larger centers. Those of us who travel drop in as often as we can. This practice enables us to lend a hand, at the same time avoiding certain alluring distractions on the road, about which any traveling man can inform you.”*

Today it's very easy to find a meeting. You find AA in the white pages of your phone book or online. You can easily find an inter group office where somebody's got a meeting book in front of them.

*“Thus we grow and so can you. Though you be but one man with this book in your hand, we hope it contains all you will need to begin.”* It's saying that if you're one man with this book in your hand, you can start something. You can get something going. You can go out and find people to take through the work and you can form your own fellowship. You can create the fellowship that you crave.

*“We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself, ‘I am jittery and alone. I couldn't do that.’ But you can. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor. We know of an AA member who is living in a large community. He had lived there but a few weeks when he found that the place probably contained more alcoholics per square mile than any city in the country. This was only a few days ago at this writing. The authorities were much concerned. He got in touch with a prominent psychiatrist who had undertaken certain responsibilities for the mental health of the community. The doctor proved to be able and exceedingly anxious to adopt any workable method of handling the situation so he inquired, what did our friend have on the ball.”*

*“Our friend proceeded to tell him and with such good effect that the doctor agreed to a test on a few of his patients and certain other alcoholics from a clinic which he attends. Arrangements were also made with the chief psychiatrist of a large public hospital to select still others from the stream of misery which flows through that institution. So our fellow worker will soon have friends galore. Some of them may sink and perhaps never get up, but if our experience is a criterion, more than half of those approached will become fellows of Alcoholics Anonymous. When a few men in this city have found themselves and have discovered the joy of helping others to face life again, there will be no stopping until everyone in that town has had his opportunity to recover if he can and will.”*

Montclair State Hospital and Greystone were two of the places that Bill was involved with early on. They would go to Greystone to get people for the meetings. They would drive from New York City out to Greystone, load up the car with people who had alcohol histories and bring them back to the meeting in Manhattan. And a lot of them ended up really getting sober. Most of them probably didn't, but a lot of them did. Here's a story from early oral tradition. They had picked up a bunch of people from Greystone Hospital and brought them back to New York to go to a meeting. This is sometime around 1938, '37. Some of them were almost wet brain; they called it advanced alcohol psychosis. They loaded these guys into their car. And they had a rocker; one of these guys was sitting on the floor, hugging himself in the fetal position, rocking back and forth. And it was during the meeting while they were talking, this guy was mumbling and Bill or somebody who was running the meeting said, “What the hell's that guy saying?” Somebody listened real close and the guy that was rocking was mumbling, “Anonymous alcoholic, anonymous alcoholic, anonymous alcoholic.” That's what he was mumbling in the middle of a meeting, and that name stuck. So Alcoholics Anonymous was named by a nut. Which is pretty appropriate, we think.

*"Still you may say 'But I will not have the benefit of contact with you who write this book.' We cannot be sure. God will determine that. So you must remember that your real reliance is upon Him. He will show you how to create the fellowship you crave."* The idea was to create the fellowship you crave with people you have exposed to the steps. God will show you how to create the fellowship you crave. Now you can't go down to the local meetings and change them but what you can do with this book in your hand is find future members, take them through the steps and create the fellowship you crave. We know that's possible from personal experience. Going to a meeting as a disgruntled group member and wanting to change everything without getting dirty out there in the world taking people through the steps, you may not be able to create the fellowship you crave that way. But you can with a book in your hand when you're going out and you're finding people to take through the work.

*"Our book is suggestive only. We realize we know only a little."* We now they knew an awful lot. This book still informs the most modern of alcohol and drug treatment processes. It still informs it because this stuff works and many of the psycho-therapeutic, medical, pharmaceutical methodologies do not. They just don't, especially when you have a real alcoholic or a real drug addict, someone who has really lost the power of choice. This is what works. *"God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick."* So what are you supposed to do in the morning? You're supposed to have a morning meditation. You're supposed to be asking God about what you can do to help other people.

*"The answers will come if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got."* You cannot transmit something you haven't got. So if you haven't gone through the steps and had a spiritual awakening as the result of the twelve steps, you cannot transmit the message of the steps and you cannot transmit the importance of the spiritual awakening. At best you can give a little one-liners, a little bit of advice and a little bit of "this is how I stay sober one day at a time." You can't share about recovery because you have not taken the steps so you don't have it. You can't transmit something you haven't got.

*"See to it that your relationship with God is right and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the great fact for us."* In the early days of AA they had you working with other almost right away. You're sober two or three days, you're gritting your teeth, you're hanging in there, but you can still try to help somebody else hang in there. But what really is the most benefit to people is to actually have a recovery experience, have a spiritual awakening based on the actual taking of the twelve steps and carrying that message to other people. You can do one of two things. You can encourage somebody to not drink or you can offer them the solution to alcoholism.

We believe that the grace of God flows evenly. It would have to. So often it's about us recognizing that grace and acting appropriately. The big reason for us to do this work is to seek a relationship with that which would solve my problem and enable me to recover from alcoholism. You do enough step work and you gain a relationship with God. So someone who's matured well in the twelve step process is going to be very far along with their relationship with the God that is solving their problems and keeping them safe and protected.

*"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the fellowship of the spirit and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the road of happy destiny."* Now, this is a great paragraph. The fellowship of the spirit is where you have a relationship with God and you're about the business of helping God's other children. But there's also the spirit of the fellowship. The spirit of the fellowship is all the fellowship activity, the sober softball, the getting to meetings early and smoking cigarettes outside and catching up with your friends. That's the spirit of the fellowship and that's a good thing too. But the fellowship of the spirit is what this whole thing is about, being in the fellowship of the spirit. What does trudge mean? It means to walk with purpose, and isn't that what we're doing? Aren't we walking a step at a time, a day at a time? Aren't we walking with purpose into this fellowship of the spirit?

There's a maturity of recovery that happens with people, the more mature they get the more they learn in their spiritual life as they stay sober and recovered, the more they will give the credit to God because they've seen just how powerless they were. They've seen just how powerful, cunning and baffling alcoholism was. They saw that it was too much for them and they saw that they needed a power. They experienced a power, seemingly from outside of themselves, to be able to recover. There's a maturity about offering the credit to God. There's an immaturity about taking credit for your recovery yourself. In other words, "Well, I'm sober today because I go to a whole bunch of meetings and I keep it simple and I keep the plug in the jug." There's an immaturity to that type of an attitude and there's a maturity to someone who is really seeking a better relationship with the power that they believe has solved their problems and saved them from ruin.

*"May God bless you and keep you until then."*

Does it say that your big hierarchical cultish home group will keep you sober? It does not say that.

If you actually do the things that the book talked about, you're going to have a life-changing experience. You're going to leave the mundane behind and embrace the extraordinary. Take this book and where there's an instruction, do what it asks to the best of your ability, then pick it back up and move on. That's how you work a program. Do not make the mistake that by learning this stuff intellectually you will be taking the steps. It's way more than learning or thinking. It really is about doing. You will be following a path that many other people have followed before you and benefiting from the results of that path.