**Paul Fisher – Tape Two Transcript**

Would you please help me open today's session with a moment of silent meditation, and please allow me to offer a prayer. After that prayer I will be concluding with the Serenity prayer, at which time feel free to join me.

**\*silence\***

God, thank you for allowing us to come together and pray in this way and thank you for providing us for a place that we may come together. We would like to thank you for allowing each and every one of us for being sober during this day, and thank you for those beautiful 12 steps in that book. And thank you for that air that you give us to breathe, and that food in our stomachs and that clothing on our backs and that shelter over our heads. And today, God, we humbly ask for your direction, care, wisdom, guidance and love as we walk through these steps, and God please set aside everything that we think we know about ourselves, the steps, the big book, sobriety and You God. And God, please help each and every one of us today to have an open mind so that we may have a new experience and discover the truth.

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

I'm Paul Fisher and I'm an alcoholic.

**\*Audience: Hello Paul\***

Welcome to the second session of the Big Book Workshop where today we'll be going through Steps 2, 3 and 4. Where we have an opportunity to walk through the 12 Steps as outlined in the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous so that we may be freed from our alcoholism. Is there anybody here who wants to be free? I didn’t see anybody raise their hand that did *not* want to be free. So, let's just get rolling here into this thing starting with Step 2 and pick up where we left off last week. Let's turn to page 59 and let's read Step 2. Where it says: ‘*came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.’* Now, when I first took the 2nd Step I had expectations. I had…I had expectations of being returned to sanity and I was gravely disappointed when I was not. Because I thought that that's what the 2nd Step meant - that I would be returned to sanity.

But notice that the authors say *could* restore us to sanity and to give you a glimpse of what to look forward to we're going to jump ahead just for a moment and turn to page 84. Page 84, paragraph three, page 84, paragraph three. Now, at this time in the book we are at step 10. So when we get to step 10, which implies we've already done an inventory. We've taken the exact nature of our wrongs to God in steps 6 and 7. We've compiled our list of people we've harmed and we're actively making amends. So providing we've done that, this is what we are going to experience in step 10. Notice what it says in that paragraph: ‘*and we have*cease*fighting anything or anyone, even alcohol, for by this time sanity* will *have returned.’* So, if you're anything like me and you have the delusion that you're gunna be…sanity is going to be returned simply by choosing a power greater than yourself, I was gravely mistaken when that happens just keep that in mind.

Let's turn to page 44. Page 44 i*s the chapter We Agnostics.* This chapter is entirely devoted to Step 2. Notice what the authors have to say in the first paragraph. It says in the preceding chapters: *you have learned something of alcoholism*. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non alcoholic. Notice where they pick up right where we left off on *page 43*, the authors are recapping what we've learned up to this point. In other words, am I *clear* on what a real alcoholic is? Am I clear on what a non alcoholic is?  *‘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 alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.’*  Here the authors one more time are emphasising what is the real alcoholic and that the solution for being a real alcoholic is spiritual.

So let's turn that into a question and consider that for yourself. Are you willing to believe that you may be suffering from an illness which *only* a spiritual experience will conquer? Consider that for a moment. In other words, do you have the power to conquer your alcoholism? Do you have the power to not drink? Keeping in mind what we discussed last week about conceding to our innermost selves that we don't have any power I'm a real alcoholic as described on page 21, and that Alcoholics Anonymous is not about not drinking, I thought it was. And how come you people didn't show me how not to drink? Because that's not what it's about. As a result of conceding to my innermost self that I have no power, *then* I have a desire to seek a Power greater than me providing I had a first step experience. So, you see, if I don't have that first step experience, there is no desire to seek any power. Why do it? So, if I'm still clinging to the idea that I have some choices left. That I can just simply choose to not drink, well see if I could simply choose, what am I doing here? If I could just simply choose to drink or not drink, what am I doing going to AA? And one more time, if you believe that you have that power to choose, why didn't you exercise that power before now?

I can't tell you how many times I've worked with guys, take them through the steps and I hear the response. “Well, I chose to stop drinking a lot of times”, “*Really?* Then how come you drank again?” Listen to the statement. Having the power to choose to quit, to stop, if I'm going to quit or stop that means I'm going to quit and stop. That doesn't mean I'm going to pick it up again. That's not quitting, that's not stopping.

OK, page 45, paragraph one. Page 45, paragraph one. Lack of power. One more time they're reemphasizing this again and again. ‘*Lack of power. That was our dilemma. We had**to find a Power by which we could live and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously, but where and how were we to find this Power?’*  In a moment, we're going to answer those two questions. So I have in my book underlined *how* and *wher*e. So in a moment, we're going to find out where we're going to find this power and how we're going to find it. That's what I love about this book. Simple set of instructions. OK, now I've had a first step experience. I have a desire to seek some power because my life is so unmanageable, I want it to improve. I have to find some power. Well, where am I going to find it? Maybe I can find it in you, in her. In that boat, in that money, in that car, in that job, right? Maybe, I don't know. Next paragraph: ‘*Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.’* They're telling us right here what the main object of the book is.

 Now. I'm not the smartest kid on the block, but I did put this much together, OK? If the purpose, if the object of the book is to enable me to find a Power greater than myself which will solve my problem, now, what is my problem? It tells me on page 23 what my problem is. It's my thinking. It's not alcohol. Alcohol was *my solution*. That's what it was for me. It became a problem, but it was my solution. So see, my main problem isn't drinking. It's my thinking. So the authors are telling me that the object of the book is to find a Power that's going to help me with that. Now, they're talking about finding a God of my understanding, not yours. Not my father's. Not the clergies, but mine. So consider this, if the main object of the book is to enable me to find a God of my understanding, what's the purpose of the 12 Steps? Considering they are contained in the book? It's to find a God of my understanding that is the purpose of the 12 Steps. Let's answer those questions: the where and the how.

Let's turn to page 55. Page 55, paragraph two, page 55, paragraph two: *‘Actually, we were fooling ourselves for deep down in every man, woman and child is the fundamental idea of God.’* Wow. It's inside of me. *‘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.’*

IIsn't that beautiful? That's where I'm going to find it. That's where I'm going to find *my* Higher Power. My understanding of God. It's not going to be out there. It's not going to be up in the sky. It's going to be inside. The authors continue by saying: ‘*We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our makeup. Just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we have 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’.* So clear and precise. Where I'm going to find it deep inside of me. How am I going to find it by searching fearlessly. Keep in mind to.. to do something fearlessly does not mean absence of fear. It simply means I can be afraid of something, but I go ahead and do it anyway or try it. That's to search fearlessly.

To illustrate that, I have a friend who's a fireman and I asked him one day, “What's th..? Aren't you afraid to go into that building?” He said “Absolutely. I'm terrified.” “Then why do you do it?” He says “Because those people need help.” So you see, he has the courage, to go into that burning building, even though he may be afraid, something to consider. If there's no fear involved, there's no need for courage. How many people brushed their teeth this morning? I don't want to embarrass anybody, OK? But do you see what I'm saying? Did it…did it require any courage to brush your teeth? There was no fear involved in that, was there? How many people? Let me see a show of hands. How many people were afraid to do a 4th step the first time you did it? Same here. I was afraid. But I went ahead and did it. Why? Because I was willing to search fearlessly.

Let's turn to page 46. Page 46. Paragraph one, line three, page 46, paragraph one, *line three: ‘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.’* Wow. That's a promise. ‘*Even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power which is God.’* We haven't done anything. All I've done in step one is conceded to my innermost self that I have no power. I cannot produce a spiritual experience for myself. And all I'm doing in Step 2 is becoming willing. That's all I'm doing in Step 2.

Am I willing to believe in something more powerful than me? And here the authors are telling us, that as soon as we're able to lay aside this prejudice, and even express… even a willingness, they're not even asking us to believe. So you see you don't have to believe, just a *willingness* to believe, that I commenced to get results, you know what commence means? It means to begin. I must be slow because I've been beginning for over 20 years. I'm still commencing to get results. Ohh that's great.

And it's impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power which is God. OK. Consider this, in order for me to fully understand God is to be God. So will I *ever* fully understand God? No, the God of my understanding, I will never fully understand that. Another thing that I've experienced in sobriety is that it is impossible for me to get closer to God. How many times have you heard people say, yeah, I'm getting closer to God? We just read on page 55, where am I going to find this fundamental idea of God? Deep inside of me. How can I get any closer than that? It's impossible to get any closer than that. It may be obscured by pomp, worship of other things, etcetera, etcetera. Now, as a result of doing the disciplines and doing repeated step work, I may have a deeper understanding. I may have a deeper relationship with the God of my understanding, but I'm not really any closer. Can't get any closer than that. Next paragraph: ‘*Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God*.’ Doesn't have to match someone else's. ‘*Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence. A spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps*.’

You know what possessed means? I'm going to be driven, I’m going to be driven. Once again, we haven't even taken any of the action steps and already the authors are promising me by having a simple willingness to believe, I'm going to be driven by a not sense of power, new sense of power. That means power unlike anything I've ever experienced before. New direction. Not direction, but a *new*sense of direction. I'm going to find myself going in a different way than I did before. Provided I took other simple steps.

Paragraph one, page 47. Paragraph one, page 47: *‘When therefore we speak to you of God, we mean your own. conception of God’.* What's most important here is that it makes sense to you? Doesn't have to make sense to me. The God of my understanding doesn't have to make sense to my sponsor. Doesn't have to make sense to the AA group I belong to. But rather it makes sense to me.

In early sobriety, I was having some difficulty and I was having a problem with this God thing, and I ended up talking to this old timer after the meeting. He said “Here, why don't you borrow my...my Higher Power for the weekend?” I said “OK. You can do that? I can borrow your God for a weekend?” He said “Well, He's been keeping me sober for 12 years. I think He can spare a little time for you.” I said “OK.” That was over 20 years ago, that I have the same God, the same God. Isn’t that amazing? This guy let me borrow his God and I still have the same God with me today. What's important is that it made sense to me.

Now, something to consider before we move on in Step 2, that it's essential that, it be a Power greater than me. It cannot be something that I can destroy or something that I have power over. I've heard some pretty funny things in meetings about people's choice of Higher Power. I've heard people say you could call it a doorknob. You could call it a *rock.* Let's imagine that you have a great big rock in your backyard. By the way, this is based on a true story that I heard from a guy. He had this huge boulder in his backyard, he said “yeah, that's my Higher Power.”

OK. Let's put that to the test. Let's put that Rock in the steps, OK. Came to believe that a Rock could restore me to sanity, Step 2 huh, that's interesting. Let's see, Step 3 made a decision to turn our will and our lives over the care of the Rock as I understood it. Oh wow, let's see, Step 5 admitted to my *Rock* to myself and another human being, the exact nature of my wrongs. Oh wow, I love this one too Step 6, were entirely ready to have my Rock remove all these defects of character, you got to be careful where you use this example you wanna.. you don't want to use this particular example in cocaine anonymous, OK? All right, but this.. but this is AA OK, we can do it here. OK, not use it. Talk about it. OK, right. Check this one out. Step 7 humbly ask my Rock to remove my shortcomings. Certainly. OK, let's…let's jump down here. Oh look, look what it says in step 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to prove our conscious contact with my Rock, as I understood it, praying only from the knowledge of my Rocks will for me and the power to carry it out.

Oh wow. Oh boy. We're just so easily amused, aren't we? I need no one to entertain me up here. Me and my mind, we're just having a gay old time. The point is, make sure it's a Power greater than you. I used women for a while and that didn't work very well. So all we're being asked is to have a willingness to believe a Power greater than us, in other words, a God of your understanding. Remember what we assessed in Step 1, that we admitted that there was very little hope for us unless we had an entire psychic change, and that no human power could produce that essential psychic change. So that means I need to find a Power.

 OK, page 47. Paragraph two. Page 47. Paragraph two: *‘We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. “Do I now believe or am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?” As soon as a man can say that he does believe or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone, a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.’*

When a mason is building an arch out of brick, the very first brick that they put in place is called the cornerstone. The outcome of that arch is contingent, it's dependent upon the positioning of that very first brick. So you see, that's our cornerstone. Our cornerstone is simply, having a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves.

Let's turn to page 53. Page 53, paragraph two, page 53, paragraph two: *‘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?’*

A couple of questions to consider. Did I become alcoholic? Was I crushed by a self imposed crisis? In other words, I did it to myself, you didn't do it to me. She didn't do it to me. The employer didn't do it. I did it to me. That I couldn't postpone or evade. So here the authors are asking us to consider, making a choice. Am I willing to make that choice? That either God is everything or He's nothing and there's even a question mark in that last sentence. Which indicates that's a stop sign. That means when I see a question mark in the book, that means I stop and I answer that question. So what is my choice to be? God is either everything or He's nothing. So these are the questions that we're going to consider with Step 2. So this is what we're going to do. I'm going to ask that everybody stand and we're going to ask 2 questions. Do I now believe or am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself? So I mean, I'm.. I'm either going to answer that yes or no. Yes, I do believe or I don't. The second question is, what is my choice? Is God everything or is He nothing I will start after you respond. Please be seated. Yes, I am willing to believe in God is everything. Congratulations.

 OK, let's move on to Step 3. Let's turn to page 59. Page 59 and we'll read Step 3. ‘*Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*.’ First paragraph on page 58. Paragraph one*,* page 58. For this alcoholic, this is the most important thing for me to hear. Every meeting I attend, where it says ‘*Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.’* Notice that there is no S on path. Have you heard, there are a lot of different ways you can do this programme? That's not what..that’s not what my book says. You know what thoroughly means, according to Webster's dictionary? It means to complete. So in other words, if I want to experience what the authors are experiencing when they talk about new power, new peace, new happiness, new direction. Being happy, joyous and free. Being in a position of neutrality, safe and protected, the problem has been removed. I stopped fighting everybody and everything. I have to be willing to do what the authors are doing. If I'm not willing to do that, I will not. It's *guaranteed*. I've had personal experience with it. Not thoroughly following this path. Working half measures in the rooms of AA.

 So if I want what they have, I have to be willing to do what they're doing, then they go on to say ‘*those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to the simple programme.’* Here, the authors are telling me why I don't stay sober. Why I'm not happy, joyous and free. Because I cannot or will not *completely, completely* give myself to this simple programme. In other words, am I willing to ask God to take it away for good? Not just today, but for good, am I willing to quit for *good*? Every single person that I've ever taken through the steps has had the same experience that Bill Wilson had, and this is basically what happened to me. Basically the same thing that happened to Bill. As a result of going through these steps, I had a spiritual experience. In other words, the compulsion to drink was removed. I was separated from alcohol, and as a result of that, God made a deal with me, He said “I'll tell you what, said I will guarantee that you will *never, ever* have to drink again *and* you will never have to live that the way you have been living. And all I ask is that you take this message of hope and pass it on to others.” It's a done deal. To make that kind of a deal with a real alcoholic.

Because I came in here with the desperation of a drowning man, I could *not* stop drinking. I could not stop hurting myself and everybody around me. So when that happened as a result of going through the steps that sounded like a pretty good deal to me. And I'm here to guarantee each and every person in this room that you do not *ever* have to drink again and you do not *ever* have to live the way you've been living. Now, it doesn't matter if you're brand new in sobriety or if you've been around the rooms for a while, even if you've been around the rooms for a while and you don't like the way your life is going. I can guarantee you it, you don't have to live that way anymore.

 OK, let's go to the next paragraph. Line 3 so we're at paragraph two, page 58. Line 3: *‘If you have 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.’* So let's turn those into questions. Notice that the authors aren't saying do you want what we have? That's a thieves motto. I want what you have. I want your stuff that’s a thieves motto. That's not what it's saying. It's saying if you have decided, in other words, have you made a decision? So if I've decided that I want what you have, I'm making a decision, I'm going to do what you're doing. So the people that are new in this room, when you go to meetings and you and you see people with long term sobriety and they seem to be enjoying life, to have what they have, you have to be willing to do what they're doing. So I have to ask myself that question, like, have I made that decision *and* are willing to go to any length to get it, doesn't say most lengths, a lot of the lengths, it says any length. Turn that into a question. Are you willing to go to *any* length? Then it goes on to say: ‘*then you are ready to take certain steps.’*

I had an experience early on with my sponsor. When I was faced with this proposition. And basically what happened was, my self will had taken over my life, again, in sobriety, and I was experiencing a great deal of unmanageability. I was suffering, I was a prey to misery and depression. I didn't feel like I could be of real help to other people; and I didn't know which way to turn; and I ended up meeting him at a coffee shop, when we met there for breakfast and there was.. it was the breakfast rush hour at this particular restaurant, and he asked me those questions “Are you willing to go to any length to have a spiritual experience?” He asked me. I said “Yes, I am, he said “Are you willing to go to any length?” I said “Yes, I am.” He said, “Therefore, get on your knees in this aisle right now and ask God for help” and that's what I did. I got on my knees, I mean, the waitresses are going back and forth, you know this is right next to the kitchen, you can hear the clanging of the dishes, you know, and the hustle bustle of the.. the.morning breakfast rush. You see, I was willing at that point. Next time you're having difficulty in sobriety and you're in a public place, stop and ask yourself that. Would I be willing to get on my knees right here, right now and ask God for help? Because remember, I'm a real alcoholic, no human power can produce that essential psychic change. I don't have the power and you can't give it to me, I have to find it from a God of my understanding.

OK, page 59.Second line from the toppage 59 second line from the top*: ‘But there is One who has all power. That One is God.’* Did you notice my name is not in there. Doesn't say, but there are two and one of them is Paul? Doesn't say that, says there is *One* who has ..didn't say most of the power, doesn’t say He has majority of the power? It says *all the power*. Once again, I'm not the smartest kid on the block, but. I did put this much together. If God has *all* the power, how much does that leave for me? None. I don't have any of the power. I am basically a foot soldier, that's what I am. The power doesn't originate in me.

OK, page 60. Page 60, we're going to read the ABC's. The ABC's on page 60: *‘(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (c) That God could and would if he were sought*.’ Let's turn those into questions. Now we're going to make a shift. Now, the authors are asking me, do I believe? So ask these questions of yourself, do you believe you're an alcoholic? Do you believe you can't manage your own life? Do you believe no human power can relieve your alcoholism? Do you believe that God could and would, if you seek Him out? In the very next line the authors say: ‘*Being convinced we were at Step 3, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood him. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?’*

Being convinced, convinced of what? Well convinced of the ABC's. Let's ask that question. Are you *convinced* that you're an alcoholic? Are you convinced that you can't manage your own life? Are you convinced that no human power can relieve your alcoholism? Are you convinced that only God can, If you seek Him out? Next, the authors say the first requirement; I heard that there were no requirements for Step 3. That's what I heard, and yet the authors say right here the first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self will can hardly be a success. I'm going to read this in the first person, to receive some perspective, so I'm no longer reading about some guy in a book in his experience, but I'm going to turn it into first person so I can get a personal perspective. Follow along with me, if you will:

*‘The first requirement is that [I] be convinced that [my] life run on self will can hardly be a success. On that basis [I] am almost always in collision with something or somebody, even though [my] motives are good. [I] try to live by self propulsion. [I'm] like an actor who wants to run the whole show; is forever trying to arrange the lights, the ballet, the scenery and the rest of the players in [my] own way. If [my] arrangements would only stay put, if only people would do as [I] wished, the show would be great. Everybody, including [myself], would be pleased. Life would be wonderful. In trying to make these arrangements [I] may sometimes be quite virtuous. [I] may be kind, considerate, patient, generous; even modest and self sacrificing. On the other hand, [I] may be mean, egotistical, selfish, and dishonest. But as with most humans, [I'm] more likely to have varied traits.*

*What usually happens? The show doesn't come off very well. [I] begin to think life doesn't treat [me] right. [I] decide to exert [myself] more. [I] become, on the next occasion, still more demanding or gracious, as the case may be. Still the play does not suit [me]. Admitting [I] may be somewhat at fault. [I am] sure that other people are more to blame*.’  *[of course they are] ‘I become angry, indignant, self-pitying. What is [my] basic trouble? [Am I]not really a self-seeker, even when trying to be kind? [Am I] not a victim of the delusion that [I] can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if [I] only manage well? Is it not evidence to (all) the rest of the players that these are the things [I] want? And do not [my] actions make each of them wish to retaliate, snatching all they can get out of the show? [Am I] not, even in [my] best moments, a producer of confusion rather than harmony?*

*[I am] self centred- egocentric, as people like to call it nowadays. [I'm] like the retired businessman who lolls in the Florida sunshine in the winter complaining of the sad state of the nation; the minister who sighs over the sins of the twentieth century; politicians and reformers who are sure all would be Utopia if the rest of the world would only behave; the outlaw safe cracker who thinks [all of] society has wronged him; and the alcoholic who has lost all and is locked up. Whatever [my] protestations, [am I] (not) most concerned with [myself,] [my] resentments and [my] self pity.’ (Of course I am) ‘Selfishness-self centeredness! That, [I] think, is the root of [my] troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of fear, self delusion, self seeking and self pity, [I] step on the toes of [my] fellows and they retaliate. Sometimes they hurt [me], seemingly without provocation, but [I] invariably find that at some time in the past [I] have made decisions based on self, which later placed [me] in a position to be hurt.*

*So [my] troubles, [I] think, are basically of [my] own making. They arise out of [me] and [I] am an extreme example of self-will run riot, though [I] usually don't think so. Above everything, [I] must be rid of this selfishness. [I] must, or it kills [me]! God makes that possible. And there often seems no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid. [I] have had moral and philosophical convictions galore, but [I] could not live up to them even though [I] would have liked to. Neither could [I] reduce [my] self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on [my] own power. [I] had to have God's help.’*

So here on page 62 in paragraph one and two, what we have is the problem. The problem is myself which is my self centeredness, my troubles are of my own making. We all have issues don't we, in sobriety? I have lots of issues too, and you know what mine are? They're on this page. These are my issues. Selfishness and self centredness. So, a couple of questions to consider, are you willing to consider that selfishness and self centeredness is the root of your troubles? Are you willing to consider that your troubles are basically of your own making? Now that being the case, I'm going to show you a shortcut. The next time you're calling your sponsor and you want to whine about something, just cut to the chase and call him up and say “Hey, I want to whine about me, OK?‘“ Instead of complaining about everybody else but, I mean check it out, I just conceded that selfishness and self centeredness, it's the root of my troubles. And that my troubles are basically of my own making, that being the case and I bring the trouble to you, who am I complaining about? I'm complaining about me. Is that wild or what? That's wild.

And the authors are telling me that I'm driven by 100 forms of fear, self delusion, self seeking, self pity. Now, if I'm driven by self delusion, how am I going to know if I'm self deluded? No, it's not a trick question. I'm not going to know. That's like going to a fish and asking it “What is water?” It will say “Well, you know it's everywhere.” That's how self delusion is in my life, it's everywhere. In other words, I'm not going to know when I'm self deluded. Why? Because I lack power. That's the reason I repeatedly go through the steps and maintain the disciplines of self examination and rely on people around me to hold me accountable. Because I'm not capable of knowing when I'm self-deluded if I'm driven by self delusion, see what a trap it is?

 Yeah, I know what I need to do, I know what's.. I know what's best for me. Certainly. I don't know what's best for me. I still don't know what's best for me today after 20 years of sobriety. If I knew what was best for me, I wouldn't be maintaining these disciplines. It was not in my plans to stay sober this long. I came in here to prove to you people these 12 steps do not work. That was the purpose of going through the steps the first time, I was going to prove to you that they do not work. What that illustrates is it doesn't matter how much disbelief or doubt that I have. By doing the actions of these principles, they began to work for me. I wasn't *working them*. They began to work for me. By the time I got to the end of the Steps, I had a spiritual experience, the compulsion to drink was removed and my attitude was totally different. I didn't intend on sticking around these rooms, I just wanted to buy a little bit of time, get people off my back, stay out of jail. When I got to the end of the steps, my thinking changed, I wanted to stick around. If I had known I was going to be sober this long, I would have done a much better job along the way.

Ok, so we have the problem in paragraph one and two, now let's look at the solution. It's in paragraph three the same page. This is the how and why of it, first of all, I had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next I decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be my director. He is the principal. I am his agent. He is a Father. I am His child. Most good ideas are simple and this concept was the keystone. Here's that arch again. The keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we pass to freedom. Couple of points here, keystone in that arch, the cornerstone is the first brick, the keystone is the brick in the *middle* of the arch, which holds it *together,* so my cornerstone, my beginning is my willingness to believe in a Power greater than me, and my keystone, which is what holds it together; is that I need to stop playing God.

Do you have a partnership with God today? I thought so, at one time, in sobriety. You know what partnership means? It means equal position of *power*. Now if He has all the power how can that be a partnership? If you work for someone else, are you in partnership with your employer? No, probably not. You do the work, they pay you. And everything you need is provided for you. Is that accurate? That's been accurate in my life. OK, providing that we do the solution which is stop playing God. What that basically means is that I'm going to do God's work. What is God's work? Well, we're going to find out.

These are the 3rd step promises, top of page 63. Page 63: ‘*When [I] sincerely took such a position.’* the position they're talking about in the previous paragraph on page 62. *‘All sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed 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.’*

Wow. That's pretty powerful. Look at the guarantees involved in that paragraph. It has been my experience that God does not have any favourites, but I'll tell you what He pays His workers really well. He pays them really well. So, if I'm willing to take the solution in the last paragraph on page 62, I will experience what it says in the first paragraph on page 63. Now the authors are telling me that we were reborn. You know what that means? That means I have to die. The Paul Fisher that I know of had to die. Paul Fisher, the alcoholic, had to die, so that my spirit may live.

I'm told that I'm not the same person I was when I walked into these rooms, I hope not. Because he wasn't wrapped too tightly. Because I just was not really well liked around the rooms, you know my…early on my friends referred to me as stark raving sober. Because that's what I was, I was out of control. My life was unmanageable, I was trying to run the show myself, so here we're being asked to make a decision. Am I willing to make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him? Now look at those words - will and life. We write wills, don't we? Before we die, you know what a will does? It gives people instructions on what to do. So if I'm going to turn my life over to the God of my understanding, I'm going to ask for instructions. My life, I'm going to do things according to what I believe God would have me be. And we're told later in the book and Step 12 what our real purpose is in these rooms. See, the real work is not doing the first 11 steps. The real work is Step 12.

The first 11 Steps prepare us to do the real work, see that deal I made with God. He guaranteed that I'll never have to drink again, and all He asked me to do was take this message of hope and carry it to other alcoholics. Best game in town for an alcoholic. Best game in town. So now we're at Step 3, before we read the uh… 3rd Step prayer, I'm going to ask those that are willing to participate, to go ahead and let's read this together. Just to pause for a moment before we do so, and to give some serious consideration, if you're willing to make this decision. My own experience with the… the 3rd step was that I was never the same after I took the 3rd step, as instructed in this book. It may have been subtle, but it was different, it was never the same after that. You can see I'm making a decision here; that I'm gonna give my life to that God. And after all, he's gonna give me…they just got through telling us He's gonna give us everything we need. So those of you that are willing to take the 3rd step prayer, those that are comfortable feel free to kneel, go ahead and do so now. Those that are not comfortable, don't feel obligated to do so.

We'll take a moment, asking for direction and care: ‘*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 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!’* Amen. Congratulations.

In the next paragraph, the authors state: ‘*We found it very desirable to take this spiritual 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. 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.’*

Now we're going to move into Step 4, we're going to flip back to page 59 *s*o we can read that, and Step 4 says: ‘*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.’* OK, last paragraph on page 63: last paragraph on page 63: *‘Next, we launched out on a course of vigorous action. The first step of which is a personal house cleaning.’*  Notice there is no mention in here of taking a gentleness break. We're going to move right in, we're going to take some action, you notice it doesn't say that we're going to mosey out on a course of action. It says launch, you ever seen a rocket launch? There's nothing subtle about it. It just *takes off* abruptly. So I'm going to launch on a course of action, not a course of action, but a course of *vigorous* action.

*‘First step of which is a personal house cleaning, which many of us had never attempted.’* Though our decision, here they're referring to Step 3, ‘*though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face and to be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.’* In other words, the *experience* that you're having right now. A feeling connected, to a God of your understanding, to your Higher Power, you will lose that, if you do not immediately move into Step 4. But you see I've had this experience, of not immediately moving to Step 4, and, this is it could have little permanent effect. So I lose that feeling, that sense of connection. That experiencing in Step 3 I'm going to lose it. Here the authors are telling us what the primary purpose of Step 4 is, it’s to uncover the things in me that have been blocking me from this God of my understanding. You see, if I'm blocked from God, I'm blocked from *you*.

It's like somebody just pulled a set of blinds in front of me and I can't see. I can't see this God, and if I can't see this God I can't see you. If I can't hear this God, I can't hear you. That's the fundamental purpose of Step 4 is to uncover those things. It says that we had to get down to causes and conditions. The cause is defined as that which produces a result. Condition is defined as a state of mind, so I need to get down to the states of *mind* that block me from God. See when I'm blocked, then I have no access to power to stay sober and to be happy, joyous and free. So ask yourself, do you want to be happy, joyous and free? So, maybe we need to get down to these causes and conditions.

Next paragraph:  *‘Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process.’* That's all it is, I don't like it. Even after all this time in these rooms I don't like doing inventory. I do it. The reason I do it, based on experience, what happens as a result of…of concluding it. *‘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.*

*We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.’*

The reason that I don't inventory my assets are No.1 they don't block me from God. They don't cause me failure and they don't cause me defeat. My assets don't cause me problems. My liabilities do, my shortcomings, my defects. Biggest argument I've heard from people through the years. “Yeah, but we should inventory our assets.” Why? Have they blocked you from God? Have they caused you failure? Have they caused you defeat? See, these are the things that block me.

Next paragraph: ‘*Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.’*

In other words, I don't straighten out mentally, physically first and then get spiritual. I need to straighten out spiritually first and then the mental and physical are straightened out automatically. OK, page 66, paragraph two, page 66, paragraph two*: ‘ If we were to live, we had to be free of anger. The grouch and the brainstorm were not for us. They may be the dubious luxury of normal men, but for alcoholics, these things are poison.’*

You know what a resentment is? It's like taking poison and expecting someone else to die. They’re home sleeping soundly. ‘*We turned 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're going to look at what we write in our inventory from an entirely different angle. ‘*We began to see that the world and its people really dominated us. In that state, [of] the wrongdoing of others, fancied or real, had power to actually kill.’*

Now, I thought that meant kill me physically. Well, it didn't kill me. I can have that resentment, I don't need to do that writing. It didn't kill me, yes, it did kill me. It can kill my spirit, it can kill my hope, it can kill my peace, my serenity, my joy, my motivation, my inspiration. Do you see what I'm saying? It can kill us in a lot of different ways, eventually for the alcoholic it does kill them physically. I can be attending meetings in these rooms and still be dying, in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Because it has been my experience that I'm only going to experience one of two things in these rooms. I'm either getting better or I'm getting worse. To my knowledge, nobody has ever been known to coast uphill. If I'm coasting I'm only going in one direction. How many people in here want to get worse? *Not one* hand went up. OK, page 67, paragraph 2. Page 67, paragraph 2:  *‘Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely look for our own mistakes.’ I'm going to look for my part in the resentment. ‘Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved 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.’*

I remember in early sobriety thinking I don't have any res..I don't have any defects of character. You do. I would go to means, I heard lots of defects I said “Oh my God, these people need *help*. I'm really thankful they're here. Let's… ohh my goodness listen to that guy over there, boy does he need to be here.” I remember talking to my sponsor about it, I said “Man, these people are… it's really sick” and I…I started going on, he said “Yeah, really uh huh I know what, I want you to get one of those little pocket tablets and put it in your pocket next time you go to a meeting and I want you to write down everything you dislike about those *SOB’s*, OK?” And I said “You bet.. OK!” I thought I was being a good little student, you know, little good AA and I went to meetings and I pulled out my little tablet and yeah, arrogant. Selfish. Cocky.  **S\*\*\***. You know, jus…you know all these, all these defects, and I remember meeting with him and saying “Well, I got…I did my list, I did my homework, now we know what's wrong with all these people don’t we?” He says “Yeah” he says "now you have your…now you have your character defects.” “Wait a minute. I'm not a s\*\*\*” “Wait a minute. Didn't you tell me you know about these affairs and…” “Oh, yeah, that, yeah uh huh” And what I saw, was I saw characteristics in people that disturbed me, that I was unwilling to look at in myself. That's why they bothered me so much.

Page 68, paragraph one. Page 68, paragraph one:  *‘We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self reliance failed us?’* So we're going to write about our fears and we're going to ask some questions.

OK, page 69. 10 lines from the top. Page 69, 10 lines from the top. 2 words in from the left, and two words in from the right:There's a statement in the middle of the line. Do you see it? It says: ‘*We all have sex problems.’* It doesn't say *they* all have sex problems. It doesn't say men have…all men have sex problems. Doesn't say all women have sex problems. We all have sex problems. Last time I looked I'm part of *we*. *Next paragraph: ‘we reviewed our own conduct over the years past.’ This is about our sexual conduct. ‘Where had we been selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault? What should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it.’*

OK. What we're going to do, is we're going to go over the 4th Step outline that I've provided you. Go ahead and pull that out. If you do not have one of those, come on up and get a copy of that. You may notice that this outline looks a little different than the example that is on page 65. Be aware that all the items that are discussed in step four are listed on this paper. You will notice it lists causes, conditions, various states of mind, various manifestations of self, things that have the potential or possibility of causing you failure or defeat. It mentions fear, resentment, selfishness. Dishonesty, self seeking, etcetera, etcetera. I got this outline from Clarence Snyder in Cleveland, OH, Clarence's sponsor was Doctor Bob, this is how Doctor Bob did the inventory. This is the way he taught Clarence Snyder how to do inventory, and Clarence Snyder in turn has passed it on.

My understanding, that in the early 40s when they were doing inventory, this is the way they did at the time, it seemed to be very effective for them and producing a 75% success rate in that Cleveland and Akron area and I figured, well, if it helped those guys so well, maybe it can help me. This is a very simple process. Couple of things I would like to emphasise about Step 4. You cannot do it wrong. You do not need to do it right. It probably will not be your last inventory. I hope for your sake. You turn over to page 71 before we go over this. Page 71, line 3 from. The top of the page.Page 71 line. Three from the top: *‘If you have already made a decision’* (that's Step 3) ‘*and an inventory’* (that’s step four) ‘*of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning.’* Doesn't say I'm finished. It's impossible for me to uncover everything that causes me failure and defeat in one inventory.

You can spot people who do regular inventory and meetings. They're pretty easy to spot. They're spontaneous, they make fun of themselves, they laugh, they have a good time, they enjoy life much more fully. Why? Because the more inventory I do as the years progress, the more I become aware of my limitations and the more I embrace my limitations, the more peace of mind I have, because now, you know exactly who I am, I have nothing to hide from you. I get to be me, around you. There's nothing to pretend anymore, and that's called peace of mind, and that's the byproduct of doing regular inventory.

What we're going to do, we're going to briefly go over this list and come up with a *real* resentment and I'm going to show you how to walk through the resentment part of the inventory. Basically, with all the… with all the statements on this list, we are going to ask two questions. What I like to do, when I take someone through the steps for the first time, is I like to do the writing for them, the reason for that, so they're not distracted with writing, all they're doing is sharing. And I sit down and I do the writing so they can fully concentrate on what it is that they're…they're sharing with me.

So in other words, you do it that way, you do the 4th and the 5th Step at the same time. Because it tells us over here, in the 5th Step, on page 72. *‘It's in the second paragraph. About 6 lines down: We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The [first] best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.’*  I may not overcome drinking if I don't do inventory. Page 73. About 7 lines down from the top: *‘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's why it's essential when we do this inventory in this workshop, that we do it with someone who has had experience in doing the inventory *in this way*. That's why if you've been around the rooms for a while, we ask that you have an open mind. In the event that you're paired off with someone who's only been sober a couple of months. You might have double digits sobriety, it doesn't matter I've seen it happen often, I've…I've seen people with long term sobriety being paired off with someone who's relatively new, who has gone through all 12 Steps and had a spiritual awakening as a result of doing the steps in this way, and that person has spiritual awakening *again*. Had a new experience. Because I can guarantee you if you approach these steps, it doesn't matter if you're new or if you've done the steps multiple times, if you will approach these steps with an open mind, you're guaranteed two things: you are going to have a *new* experience with the steps, and you will discover some truth about yourself and that's what my sponsor regularly will ask me whenever I become resistant “ How free do you want to be?”

OK, so basically we're asking two questions, the first item is self pity, you sit down with the person you're going to ask him “Hey, do you have any self pity?” “Yeah, I got some of that.” “All right, give me. Some examples.” That's the first question. Give me examples of your self pity. You may or may not have all of these things on this list, that’s why we ask that question. Do you have any self pity? Yeah. OK. Give me some examples and you're gunna write those down. The second question we're going to ask per item is who was affected by that? So the first question is, if you have it, give me examples. Second question, who was affected? We're going to move on to the next item, self justification. “You have any of that?” “I can't think of anything.” “Well, did you ever justify your self pity? Did you ever justify drinking? Did you ever justify not going to meetings, not doing inventory?” Self condemnation, that's about beating ourselves up, self importance, criticising, negative thinking, vulgar immoral thinking.” “What is that?” “Well, I'll tell you what it is you're sitting in a meeting, you're having sexual fantasies about someone in the meeting, that's vulgar immoral thinking. Do you have fantasies of violence or property destruction? Do you have that fantasy of waiting for that person around the corner with a baseball bat? Insincerity, procrastination, dishonesty, impatience, resentment, hate, envy, jealousy, laziness, lying, gossip, selfishness, fear. So we're basically going to ask two questions with the exception of resentment and fear. When we get to the fear, we're simply going to make a list of all the things that we fear.

Resentment, we're going to ask numerous questions. So basically I'm going to ask - what is the resentment? What's the reason I have it? What's my part in the resentment? Then I'm going to look for the underlying fear. What is it I'm expecting from that person? What is it I'm afraid I'm not going to receive? Let me give you an example, from my own inventory. When I came into these rooms, I hated my Mother. I hated that woman with a passion. She kicked me out of the house when I was 15 years old. Here I am 15 years old living in abandoned houses. Sneaking in the back of restaurants, waiting for them to bring out excess food and getting food out of the dumpsters so I could eat, and as a result of living on the streets and living in abandoned houses I turned to a life of crime and I blamed her and I ended up in prison, it's her fault. Look what she did to me, I'm only 15 years old she kicked me out of the house. It wasn't until I came into these rooms, had opportunity to inventory and I was asked those questions. My resentment was, my mother kicked me out of the house, how did I treat her? Not very nicely. I was out of control. Everybody in that house was terrified for their safety. My mother was at her wits end; she had no other options available to her at that time. She didn’t know what else to do, I was out of control, that was my part. What was it that I was afraid I was not going to receive from my mother as a result of her kicking me out of the house? It was very simple. She wasn't going to love me anymore. So you see the underlying fear was, fear of being unloved. I inventoried her numerous times before I got to the truth in that. The reason it is essential that we uncover the exact nature of our wrongs.

 Look at how Step 4 is written differently than Step 5. In step 5, we're not sharing a list of our wrongs. We're admitting to God, ourselves and another human being the exact *nature* of our wrongs, that means…the very nature means the origin, the cause of my wrongs. In other words, *specifically* how was I dishonest? Specifically, what did I lie about? Specifically, what was the underlying fear? You see once I got to the truth about fear of being unloved, that resentment towards my Mother melted away. When I was able to see *my* part. As it says here in the book, where had we been selfish, dishonest, self seeking and frightened, we were prepared to look at it from an entirely different angle. I'm there to look at *my* part in that, so if it's not feeling resolved, it's generally because I haven't uncovered my part. I haven't uncovered the exact nature, and the only way I know how to get to the exact nature is through a series of questions, not going to someone who is educated but someone who has had personal experience in doing inventory, and knowing what questions to ask.

Now, when we do step 6 and 7, if I don't know specifically what it is I want God to remove He's not going to remove it and the reason for that, is because there's one spiritual law that God will not violate and that's called free will. *I* need to know what it is I want God to remove. So, if I don't know specifically that it's fear of being unloved or fear of being disliked or fear of being harmed, to God in 6 and 7 it's not going to be removed. That's why *I* must know specifically what it is that I want Him to remove. Couple of things to consider when doing your 4th step this week. Keep it simple, know that you do not need to do it right and you cannot do it wrong. Ask for guidance from the God of your understanding and you will find that this is a simple and straightforward process. It does not matter who does the writing, whether it be you or your sponsor, what is most important is that you…you are willing to face the things that block you from the God of your understanding. In addition, I would recommend that you read pages 72 up to the second paragraph on page 84. That's page 72 up to the second paragraph on page 84 to prepare us to go over steps 5 through 9 next week. I would like to congratulate all of you on your courage and your willingness. Thank you for allowing me to be of service today and please help me to close with the Lord's Prayer.