Paul Fisher – Tape 3 Transcript

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

**\*Silence\***

God, thank You for, umm, allowing us to come together and pray in this way, and thank You for providing us a place that we can come together. We would like to thank You for those beautiful 12 steps in that book. And thank You for allowing each and every one of us for being sober during this day. And during this time together, we humbly ask for Your…Your care, Your guidance, Your wisdom, Your direction and Your love as we walk through these steps. And God, we thank You for that air that You give us to breathe today. The food in our stomachs, the clothing on our backs and the shelter over our heads. And God, *please* set aside everything that we think we know about ourselves, about the 12 steps, about the book, about sobriety and about 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.

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

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

and I'd like to welcome all of you to the third session of the Big Book Workshop, where we are taking the 12 Steps as outlined in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, so that we may recover from our alcoholism. I'd like to welcome each and every one of you here today. I'd like to congratulate you on your willingness and your courage, those of you that uh completed your 4th step this week, we'll be talking about that in a moment. Couple of things to consider. I'm not here to challenge anyone. I'm not here to tell you how you should be doing sobriety. I'm not here to tell you how you should be living your life, I'm simply here to share with you my own personal experience and how I was taken through the steps in the beginning and how the steps were taken in the early 40s.

So I'm going to be primarily continuing to stick to what it says in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous and sharing my own experience with you about that. If you have resistance to what's being shared in this workshop, I would ask you to consider having an open mind. If it's not in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, it's not AA.

When I work with other alcoholics, I only have a couple of things to share. One of those is my own experience and what it says in the Big Book and that's it. That's all I really have to share, is my experience and what it says in the book. So, let's see who's willing to be rocketed there and notice, I said *rocketed*, I didn't say mosey. Or shuffle. We're going to be rocketed, in other words, it's going to be sudden. The authors mentioned that throughout the book they talk about ‘suddenly this happened’, ‘suddenly that happened,’ you know what suddenly means? It means without notice. That means my ego's not going to be knocking on the door and saying “Get ready, here we go. You're going to change. Your thinking is going to be transformed. Your ideas are going to be modified.” So, it happens suddenly. So, everybody who completed their 4th step, would you please stand.

**\*Inaudible comment from audience member\***

OK, I'd like to congratulate each and everyone of you. You are the ones that are going to be experiencing the promises that we'll be talking about today, you are the ones that are being rocketed into the 4th dimension, I'd like to welcome you to the Fellowship of the Spirit and congratulations.

**\*Applause\***

OK, now those of you that did not complete your 4th Step, I would encourage you to continue coming to the workshop and continue going through the steps, and when you get opportunity to do so, go ahead and hook up with your sponsor, spiritual advisor and do that fourth step, because that's part of the path to the freedom that we all seek in these rooms. Also be aware of those of you that did not complete your 4th Step, you will not be experiencing the promises that we're talking about today. You see, I *cannot* experience the promises that the authors talk about, unless I'm willing to do *exactly* what the authors have done in this book. So, if I want what they have…so, when they talk about experiencing new freedom, new peace, new happiness, new sense of direction, I'm not going to experience those if I'm not willing to take the actions described in this book.

OK, so let's jump right into it. Assuming that you did your 4th and 5th Step, we're going to turn to page 75. That's page 75, paragraph two. Page 75, paragraph two*.* What we're going to be doing in the next few minutes is going over what we need to do after we complete our 5th step. In the event that your sponsor already walked you through this I'm going to ask that you walk through it again with the rest of us in the workshop. For those of you that were not taken through the remaining steps in this way.

OK, Paragraph two. The authors say, *‘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. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. 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. We feel we are on the Broad Highway walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.’* These are the 5th Step promises, as we mentioned in an earlier session, that there are not 12 promises in this book, there are many, many promises. These are the 5th Step promises.

Here's something to consider, the authors are saying once I've taken this step ‘*providing [I] withhold nothing, [I'm] going to be delighted’* That doesn't mean I'm excited about what I'm *sharing* with you in my inventory, but am I delighted about the work I'm doing? Now, if I'm not delighted I can shut the book and stop there, because that's exactly what my first sponsor did with me, I did my first inventory, he said, “Are you delighted?” And I said, “No.” And then he asked me a couple other questions “Do you feel that you can look the world in the eye?” “Well, no.” “Do I feel alone in perfect peace and ease?” “No.” “Are my fears falling from me?” “No.” “Did I begin to feel the nearness of my creator?” “No.” And he shut the book! He shut the book and said, “That's it!” I said, “What do you mean that's it? We need to go on and do the other steps.” He said, “No.” He says, “It says right here. ‘Once we've taken the step, withholding nothing, we are delighted’.” He said, “You left something out.” “No, I didn't.” “Oh, yeah you did.” About three days later I give him a call and I say, “You know, there was this one thing. There was this *one little thing* that I forgot to mention.”

And invariably that has been my experience with people I've taken through the steps. They get to this point, they're not delighted, it's because, there's something they're still holding on to because the authors are telling me, look how it's worded, *‘Withholding nothing. We are delighted.’* These are the promises of doing the 5th Step.

Now, my own experience with the inventory was, this was the first, not first, but rather most impactful relationship, or rather most impactful experience I had with God. Began to have a much more impactful experience when I did my 4th Step because for the first time in my life I was able to sit down with another human being and tell them about *all* this stuff that I had done. All the harm I had caused to other people, all the secrets that I had concealed. These were all the things that were blocking me from God. So, you see, when I'm *willing* to disclose that to another person, I am going to be delighted, and I started to experience what it says in the next sentence, ‘*that [I] could be alone in perfect peace and ease.’*

So, consider that, if you're not delighted about what you're doing, there's probably something you're leaving out. The last sentence it says *‘we feel we're on the Broad Highway walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe*. How many times have you been to meetings and heard the topic, ‘Let me hear your experience with being with the Spirit of the Universe’? I…I don't see any hands going up. It's right there in the book, they're telling us this is what we're going to *experience*. This isn't about knowledge. This isn’t about *information*; this is something we're going to experience, I'm going to begin experiencing walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe, what's that like for you? So, if I don't have that experience, I can't transmit it. And if I haven't experienced it, I certainly can't talk about it. So, if you're having an experience of walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe, I encourage you to take that experience back to your meetings and tell people about it. Share your experience, about walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

Now, I would have resistance when I would hear people talking about these things in meetings and the reason I had resistance to it, is because I was not having that experience. So if you share an experience that *I haven't had*, my mind is going to have resistance to it “Oh, that's not possible. He's not really walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe. He's just like the rest of us. He's a drunk just like me.” Well, of course. But I'm here to tell you, when we take these steps, in the way that they were done in the 40s, your sobriety is going to look *really differen*t. Because that's what happened to me. My sponsor took me through the steps *very quickly*. See you cannot take anybody through these steps too quickly, but I'll tell you what you can take them through too slowly. See, I'm the real alcoholic. I need to get through these steps as quickly as possible because I need to get to that Power and I need to get to it *now*, because I need power because I'm a real alcoholic. So, consequently, people I got sober with, some of them didn't get around to doing their 4th Step till they were 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 months. I wasn't superior to those people, all I'm saying is that my sobriety looked *really different*. I felt *really different* than they did. They struggled much longer than I did. Because when I went all the way through the steps I had that spiritual awakening the compulsion to drink was removed!

OK, next paragraph. Here the authors are giving us specific instructions on what to do when we finish our 5th Step. *‘Returning home….’* You notice, after we do this it doesn't say, you know, take a week or two to consider what you did. Doesn't say go to a movie. You know, doesn’t say go take a bubble bath and relax, you've done a *good job*. No, it says *‘Returning home….’* In other words I've just finished my 5th step *‘Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done.’* Carefully reviewing. That's why we don't burn our 4th Step. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that in meetings, “Yeah, I got done with my 4th step. My sponsor said ‘Go ahead and burn it.’” Why? I need that inventory, for future reference. *Then* they ask us to say a prayer. It says *‘We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.’* So, if I'm going to thank God, that means I'm going to say a prayer. So, I'm going to carefully review what I've already done, then I'm going to say a prayer I'm going to thank God, from the bottom of my heart that I know Him better. *‘Taking this book down from our shelf, we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps.’* That means I’m going to flip back to page 59. *‘Carefully reading….’* Doesn't say read. *‘Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask…’* If I'm going to ask, that's a *prayer.* *‘….we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last.’* So see if I'm going to be free, if I want that freedom, these are the instructions that are necessary for me to follow. In other words, I'm going to turn back to page 59 and I'm going to take the first 5 Steps and I'm going to take them and turn them into questions. Have I admitted that I have no power over alcohol? Have I admitted that my life was unmanageable? In other words, I need a new manager. And then I'm going to review Step 2. Have I come to believe that a Power greater than me can restore me to sanity? And then I'm going to go to Step 3, I'm going to ask that question. Have I made that decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him. Step 4, have I made a searching and fearless moral inventory? Step 5, have I admitted to myself, to God and another person the *exact* nature of my wrongs?

And then they're going to ask us to consider further questions. I was taught that wherever there is this question mark in the book, it's like a stop sign, I'm going to stop and I'm going to ask that question. *‘Is our work solid so far?’* So, stop and ask yourself that. Is your work solid so far? *‘Are the stones properly in place? Have [you] skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?’*  These are the things we will consider in this hour. Then we turn the page. Then the authors say, *‘If….’* *big word* *‘If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasised willingness as being indispensable.’* Do you know what indispensable means? Means I can't live without it. In other words, my *willingness* is indispensable. Here comes a question *‘Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?’*

That which is objectionable, is that which blocks me from God, when I'm blocked from God I'm blocked from you. So let's ask that question of our…of ourselves. Are you now ready to *let* God? See, I have to be willing to *let* God remove them. So if there's something that I want you to take, let's say I have this…this bottle of water up here. Let's say I want you to take this bottle of water and I bring it to you and I hand it to you, and you grab a hold of it, but I don't let go. You could be stronger than me, you could be more powerful than me, you could be bigger than me, but if I'm not willing to let go of that bottle, you can't remove it. So you see, Step 6 is about *getting ready*. The 6th Step is preparing us to *ask* God to remove it. So that's all we're doing is Step 6 is getting ready.

Then another question, *‘Can He now take them all every one?’* Ask that question, can he take them all? *‘If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.’* There's a prayer, if you have some resistance, we ask God. The authors even give us a clue that Step 6 is about getting ready, in the very next paragraph they say, *‘When ready….’* So I have to make sure I'm ready OK, so am I ready?

 OK, let's move on to Step 7. When ready, we say something like this, *‘My creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad...’* Not some of me, not the worst parts, not the majority of me, but 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. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.’* We have then completed Step 7.

This is the reason we need to be *specific* about what we're asking God to remove. My own experience, is that if I'm not specific and I don't know literally what it is I'm asking him to remove, He can't remove it. Now, that doesn't necessarily mean that He will remove it, because I'm not God. I don't know when He's going to remove it. My job is just simply to identify specifically what I *want* Him to remove. You notice that my name isn't anywhere in these two paragraphs. It's not in there, is it? So you see, I'm not *working* on my defects. You ever heard that? “Yes, I'm working on my defects of character.” ‘*Certainly…’* If you hear me saying I'm working on my defects, really what I'm saying is I'm going to *embellish* them. The more I work on my defects the worse they get! That doesn't mean I don't make a conscious effort to be honest, sincere, helpful, willing, thoughtful. Sure, go ahead and make an effort in those areas, you see, these steps are paradoxical. I don't remove the defects, I simply do the work and leave the results to the God of my understanding. So you see, it's impossible for me to work on my defects *if* I'm applying these spiritual principles.

OK, let's see who's ready to do 6 and 7, and what I'm going to ask is that we read the 7th Step prayer, out loud, together. So, those of you that are willing to do so, and that…and you feel that you are ready to *let God* remove all these things that have blocked you from Him, let's go ahead and say the 7tth Step prayer together: (audience and speaker say together)

*‘My creator, I am now willing that you should 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. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen’* Congratulations.

OK, now that we've completed Step 7, let's move on to Steps 8 and 9. Let's turn back to page 59 and let's read those steps. Page 59, let's go down to Step 8 where it says, *‘Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.’*  Step 9, *‘Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.’* OK, back here on page 76, paragraph 3. Back here on *page 76, paragraph 3*. Notice what the authors immediately say after we've taken the 7th Step, they say *‘Now we need more action without which we find that “Faith without works is dead”.’*

Let's look at Steps 8 and 9. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory. *Wow*, do you see what they're saying? If you haven't burned your 4th Step, you already have your amends list completed. It says it right there, itt says we have it! It doesn't say we construct or develop a list. It says we *have* a list. So you see, if I'm doing the inventory as outlined in this book, I already have a list. Says we made it when we took inventory, it's already there. They go on to say, *‘We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. 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. Remember it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.’* So if I'm going to go out and *repair,* repair means to mend or restore, to mend or restore. In other words, I'm going to attempt to mend or restore, the damage that I have caused.

OK, page 77, third line from the top of the page. Page 77, third line from the top of the page. *‘Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.’* Here the authors are telling me what my real purpose in life is. Not my purpose in *AA*, but my purpose in *life.* It doesn't say ‘to be of maximum service.’ It says *‘to fit ourselves* to be of maximum service.’ In other words, I have purpose and meaning for *life* today. I didn't have that when I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous. I had no sense of purpose; I had no sense of *meaning* for *life*. Life didn't have any meaning. I thought it was over. Now I have purpose, wow. From that line, let's go down seven lines. Go down seven lines from where we just read. *‘But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to sit right the wrong.’* That means I'm going to attempt to right the wrong. In order to do that, it's going to be necessary for me to ask “What can I do to right the wrong?” Because that's why I'm there. Let's go to the next paragraph. Next paragraph. Line four. Next paragraph, line four. *‘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. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret.’*

The experience that comes to mind is, the word arrogance kept coming up in my inventories and I finally faced the reality that in order to be free from that it was necessary for me to go back and make amends to every single person I knew in AA that had been affected by my arrogance and I did *not want* to do that. I still don't *like* making amends. I *make them* because I want to be free. So I ‘hemmed n hawed’ and there was this one person in AA who I felt didn't *really* deserve my amends because he was much more arrogant than me. So, I went ahead and humbled myself, and then I went to the guy and admitted I was wrong in treating him the way that I had and that my arrogance had caused him harm and when I got to the part in the amends where I ask, “Is there anything I can do to right this with you?” And he responded with, “Nah…watching you grovel was enough for me!” You see, but by *that time* I ended up *laughing* right along with him. You see, it's important for us to not take ourselves too seriously, and I'll tell you why it's essential that we not take ourselves too serious, and that’s because *we* are the *joke*. *I'm the joke Hahahaa .*  You won't have that experience if you don't do these steps.

OK. Last paragraph on page 77. *Last paragraph on page 77*. *‘Under no condition do we criticise such a person or argue. Simply we 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, realising that nothing worth while 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.’* I'm not there to talk about *them*. I'm not there to talk about their *wrongs.*

When I go out to make an amends, I'm there to do one thing and one thing only, and that is to make an amend. So, if you're going to make an amend and then when you get done you think, ‘OK, now there's something I need to share with you, OK, now I got the amend out of the way and I’ve shared that with you,’ and then I turn to the person say, “Oh, by the way, there's some feelings I need to share with you.” Or “I need to confront you about some behaviour of yours.” I can guarantee you it will dilute the amend, because that's not what it says here. See, I'm there to sweep off *my* side of the street, you see, it doesn't matter how people respond. It does not matter whether…they accept or reject the amend. I'm there for one reason only to clean up my side of the street so I can be clean and I can be right with my God, and I can be right with you. So you see, it doesn't matter if you reject my amend, it does not matter, that's not why I'm there. I'm not doing it to please *you*, to maintain your friendship, to get you to *like* me, to give me some strokes, pat me on the back. I can tell you what will happen, when uh, when our motives aren't clear. My uh, my wife did something to me one day and I resented it. And I felt she owed me an amend, and I instantly recognised that I needed to make her an amend as well, so I decided well, if I go make an amend to her, she'll make one to me, right? So I go to her and you know, I make this poetic amend. And I go to her and I make this amend and she doesn't say anything. So then I walk off, p\*\*\*ed off. I mean I humbled myself, what kind of a *programme* is *she* working? She didn't make amends to *me*. And then, it hit me. That my motives were dishonest, oh my God, *now I gotta go back and make amends for the way I made amends*!

Now, keep in mind, at this time I had no expectations of amends from her, because I was *clear* about the motives for making that amends so I went back there and made amends for the way I made amends and as soon as I got done, she says “Oh yeah, by the way, I have an amend I'd like to make to you.”

Page 78, paragraph two,page 78, paragraph two. *‘Most Alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory 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 are afraid to face them.’* So here the authors are telling us, it's OK to let the person *know* that you're a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous, that you've been slow to pay.

An experience that comes to mind, is, I committed an armed robbery when I was drinking, and there were two of us involved in it. Now, the question is, am I entitled to go back to that Taco Bell and tell them my crime partner's name? Not according to what the authors instruct. So, I was asked that inevitable question, by my sponsor “How free do you want to be?” “I don't know if I want to be that free.” What happened was, I had the money in hand and I went back to the Taco Bell. And I walked in, of course the management had changed, and I walked in and I let them know who I was “Hi. My name is Paul Fisher. I'm a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous. And, in order for me to stay sober it's essential that I go back and I correct all the wrongs that I've committed. By the way, “I…” I didn't mention my crime partner's name because the truth was I did commit the crime. “I robbed your store and…and I believe this is the amount of money that I took.” And I handed him the money. His first reaction was “You know, I could call the police.” I said, “I'm aware of that.” He said, “I don't believe you're doing this. *Why* are you here?” So, I *reiterated* one more time “I'm a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and in order for me to stay sober it's *essential* that I right *all* the wrongs that I've committed, otherwise I won't stay sober. He said, “I just can't believe… I've never heard of such a thing! Do *all* you people do this?” I wasn't going to answer that question. Because I'm a spokesman for AA, anywhere I go, I'm a spokesman for AA. I asked him if there was anything else I could do. He said, “No, this, this is fine, this…this is great.” And I'm a free man today. See, that doesn't hang over my head anymore.

OK, page 79. Page 79, paragraph one, page 79, paragraph one*.* *‘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. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything.’* Notice that the authors say that these take num…innumerable forms. There are a lot of creative ways we can make amends. Working with the sponsor, who has experience in going through these steps repeatedly, who has experience with making amends, sponsors can be *very* creative.

There was a group of people that I owed money to, in another State. And it was a *large* four figure amount of money. So, what I did was, I wrote a letter - general service delivery, in that town, hoping to contact these people because I didn't…I…I…I didn't know how to find them. And I…I didn't get a response, so I felt “Well, I'm done with that one.” You know. If the opportunity presents itself, I'll make that amend. And I took that back to my sponsor and he said, “Well, let's hold on a minute.” And then he asked that question. He said, “How free do you to want to be?” I *hate* him whenever he starts *any* conversation with “How free do you want to be?” I know something is in store that I'm not going to *like*. It's not going to *suit* my ego. So, he asked the question I said “Yeah. I'm willing to go to any length.” He said, “By the way, when you took that money, do those people belong to the same universe that you do?” I said, “Yeah.” He said “So not only did you take money from those people, you took money from our universe, didn't you?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Well you willing to pay it back?” And I said, “Yeah.” He said, “OK, this is what we're going to do” He said, “Every time you go to a meeting and the 7th Tradition basket comes around, you're going to put at least a 10 or a 20 dollar bill in there, and you're not allowed to let anybody see you do it and you're not allowed to tell anyone.” I'll tell you man, that was *really* hard because that basket came around, I wanted to snap that 20 dollar bill and I wanted everybody to know what a generous little AA I was being. ‘*Can you see how generous I…look here, I'm putting a 20 dollar bill in there! I'm so big hearted.’* And it was difficult. So, what I did was I maintained a written record of the amount of money, until it was paid off. He instructed me not to tell anybody for five years. So for the first five years of sobriety I couldn't tell a soul about that.

So you see, sponsors can be very creative. A couple of other examples, I sponsor a guy who, committed cruelty to animals. What he did is he went to an animal shelter and did some volunteer work. Another guy was cruel to women, he ended up going back to a woman's shelter and doing some volunteer work. Just recently, I sponsored a guy and I had him go to a woman that I selected, and to sit down with her because he…this person had committed harm to a number of *nameless* women. He didn't know their names. So I had him sit down with this woman and make the amends to her. So you see, there are a lot of creative ways that we can make amends.

OK, page 79, paragraph two. Page 79, paragraph two*.* *‘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.’* In other words, we need to be considerate of who may be affected by this. That's why in Step 9 it says, *‘Made direct amends (to such people) wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.’* So, I need to consider that, is this amend going to cause more harm? If so, I do not make that amend directly to that person. In other words, I'm not allowed to go back and make amends with someone, at their expense just so I can relieve myself of my own guilt and shame.

OK, page 80. Page 80, paragraph one, page 80, paragraph one. *‘Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission…’* these are the instructions. *‘… If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink.’* So I need to consider, are other people going to be affected? For example, I'm married. I need to make a financial amend. I set…there's a …there's an *ideal* payment arrangement in my head. I need to sit down with my wife and go over it with her. You know, there's a financial amend I need to make. How's that going to affect our budget? So you see, I wasn't entitled to mention my crime partner's name when I made that amend. Because I'm not there to satisfy myself at the expense of someone else. So here the authors are giving us specific instructions: We've obtained permission, we've consulted with others. In other words, I'm not off running…I'm not out there running on my own doing this. In other words, I'm going to check it out with my sponsor.

OK. Paragraph four on page 80. Paragraph four, line 4. Page 80, paragraph four, line 4. *‘He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again…’* See, I'm there to do God's work, this is part of *God's work*. When I made that decision in Step 3 to turn my will and life over the care of God as I understand Him, simply means I'm going to do God's work, what does that mean? That means I'm going to go out and clear up the wreckage of my past, and present, if you have any, so I can be free, so I can be of service to other people, and I'm going to place the outcome in God's hands. I didn't know what was going to happen when I went back to that Taco Bell. I didn't know. I didn't know what was going to happen as a result of putting that money in the basket, all I know is it was necessary for me to place the outcome in God's hands.

There was another amend I made, *years* after the fact, where I owed a uh, music store a bunch of money for some equipment that I had bought on the *installment plan*, which I never paid for. Now at the time I committed the harm, they didn't have computers. I called the music store, identified myself “Hi, my name is Paul Fisher. I'm a sober member of AA, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” And the guy asked, “When was this?” And I gave him the estimated year, he said, “Hold on a minute.” He put me on hold for 15-20 minutes. He came back and he said, “We can't find any record.” I said, “Are you sure?” I said, “I'm certain that I owe you this money.” So he put me on hold again for 10 more minutes. Come to find out he ended up going in…up to the attic and they have these little index cards, where they maintain their records for the money that people owed them. And he came back on the phone the second time, he said, “I don't believe you're making this call. *Why are you doing this?* *This makes…nobody has ever done this…why are you doing this?”* I reiterated to him “I'm a sober alcoholic today in AA and if I don't make this amend I'm not going to stay sober.” And then he asked me, “Well, how much money would you like…well, how do you want to handle it?” I said, “Well, I can afford to send you X amount of dollars a month. Would that be…?” “That'll be fine with us. That'd be great.” It happened as a result of going to them in a humble and forgiving spirit, as the authors have instructed us to do in this chapter. Not one time, in the entire time I've been sober, have I heard an unreasonable request *providing* that my motives were *clear* and *pure*, and that I approached them in a *humble, forgiving* spirit.

OK. Let's turn to page 82. Page 82, paragraph two. Page 82, paragraph two, line 2. Second line in that paragraph. *‘Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is keep 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.’* Without any exception, every single person I have known in the rooms of AA, who have gotten sober and who have drank again…and I've known people who have come into these rooms, went through the steps, pray every day, work with newcomers, go down to Lark and do H&I work, etcetera, etcetera. and they drink again. And without exception, they all have one thing in common and it has nothing to do with they stop going to meetings. Because I've seen a lot of people through the years drink again who go to meetings on a regular basis, what they had in common was they did *not* finish their amends. See, an ironic thing happens to me in these rooms, I start to develop a thing called a conscience.

My threshold for pain today is lower than it was when I was new. What I mean by that is, I can't tolerate the guilt and the shame and regret with dishonesty today like I used to be able to. I can't get away with the things that I couldn't get away with before and today it's even worse. So, I've developed a conscience. Now, if I'm a real alcoholic and I'm engaged in dishonest conduct; and I haven't completed all my amends, I'm probably gonna drink again. Why? Because I'm a real alcoholic. I can only stand the pain for so long. I'm going to *have* to medicate it.

Top of page 83. Paragraph one, page 83. *‘Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead.’* Notice it doesn't say we kick…kick back and wait for the person to come to us. *We* take the lead. So if there's somebody that you…that you've committed a *harm* towards here in The Valley, make contact, you take the lead. That's what I must do. I must take the lead. I've heard many times “Well, I think I'll just make that amend on the phone.” My question is, did you commit the harm over the phone? Did you commit the harm in person? That may mean I may need to get on that plane and go back to…to Philadelphia, to Chicago, to LA to make that amend.

Earlier in this chapter we heard about gaining *consent* and that's what I was taught to do. So when I need to make an amend and I see you at the meeting, I'm not going to go up to you and say “Come here. Come here. Come here. I have an amend I need to make” *No*, I'm going to gain your consent. That means I'm going to go to you and I'm going to let you know there's an amend I'd *like* to make, are you open to hearing it? The person may say no! I've had that experience. I've heard the person say, “No, I'm not open to hearing it.” Does that mean I need to go back and make the amend, at a later time? No, because I made the effort. Providing that I feel genuinely sorry for what I've done. So I'm going to ask for their consent. Then I'm going to ask them… if they say yes they're open to hearing it… I'm going to ask them one of three questions. If I'm speaking to the person on the phone because that's the only way I can reach them, I'm going to leave a message. And this is what I did this particular…on this one particular incident. I called the person up and I had wounded this woman deeply, not once, but several times. I had betrayed her. So I sensed that she probably wasn't too willing to hear from me anytime soon. So what I did was I waited for the dust to settle…that's why it's important to have a sponsor who's had experience with making these amends. There are times that we can go back and make amends prematurely, *too soon.* That's why I need spiritual guidance. So what I did, was I left a message on her voicemail. I let her know what I was about to do, I had an amend I'd like to make. I'd like to know if she was open to it and then I ask her these three questions: Would you rather hear it over the phone? Would you like to receive it in writing? Or would you prefer to meet in person? She called back, left a message on my voicemail, thanked me for the amend, thanked me for the growth that I was experiencing and said, “I would prefer to receive it in writing.”, and that's what I did. And it's a done deal. So keep that in mind, we're there to gain consent first. We're not there to demand anything.

Page 83, paragraph two, page 83, paragraph two. *‘The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it.’* I'm *living* this programme. I'm not *doing* it. I'm not *working* the steps anymore. Consider *living* the steps in your life rather than trying to work them. Next paragraph on the same page. *‘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. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone.’* There are some people we can't contact. What I do is I have this little file at home with a little card in there, with the person's name, and the harm. In the event that that person presents themselves then I'm willing to make that amend.

Next paragraph. These are the 9th Step promises. These are not ‘the 12 promises’. Some alcoholic came up with that idea. *‘If we are painstaking about this phase of our development…’* What phase? The phase of making amends! Check this out *‘…we will be amazed before we're halfway through.’* So we're going to be amazed before we are halfway through making our amends. They're not saying before we're halfway through the Steps in other words, I'm not going to experience these promises when I'm at Step 6. Look at where this paragraph is, it's contained within the 9th Step of the book. And here are the promises, this is what you *will* experience before you're halfway through, if you're willing to go to any length to be free from alcoholism. *"We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.’ Wow.* New…not freedom - ***new*** freedom! Freedom like you've never experienced before. Happiness, not happiness - ***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 realise 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. They will always materialise if we work for them.’*

So, in order for me to experience these promises I have to be willing to do…take the action. The guys that I sponsor *absolutely* amaze me. *Absolutely* amaze me. That is one of the gifts, in having gone through the steps and sponsoring other people. And watching the *gift* of sobriety and God's grace and the freedom when we take these actions.

The experience that comes to mind is that I sponsor a guy who has harmed *Black* people. So, I meet him in a coffee shop and we're going over his 9th Step list, and there happens to be a Black guy sitting in the restaurant. And I ask the guy, “Are you willing to go to any length to have a spiritual experience?” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “Come on, let's go.” He said, “Where are we going?” So we…so we go over and we sit down with this Black gentleman we introduce ourselves, we explain to him what this person is about to do. The guy is sitting there with his elderly grandmother. We sit down and the guy, goes through the spiel. You know he tells…he identifies his name, lets him know that he's a sober member of AA, and that he's harmed a lot of Black people through the years. And then he says, “I was wrong.” And that he was truly sorry. And then he asks, “What can I do to right this?” In the meantime, his grandmother has a smile from ear to ear. So here are four people having a spiritual experience, not one, but all four of us. He got to the part of the amend where he asked, “What can I do to *right* this?” And the guy responded with, “Well God has already forgiven you and I've forgiven you.” What a wonderful experience. Chances are that that gentleman never heard an amend from a White guy before, in that manner. It was a healing experience. And he walked away a free man. And I walked away a free man. And I walked away, with some gratitude and my cup was full because I got to sit and *witness* the miracle, of making amends. And I'm here to tell you from personal experience, you will have those kinds of experiences if you're willing to go to any length. The question is how free do you want to be?

I'd like to, show you how not to make an amend, and show you how to *properly* make an amend. First, I'd like to share with you as instructed in the book, these are the things we are going to say when we make amends, the thing I love about this chapter is that, the authors tell us what to say, what not to say, when to do it, when not to do it. So you see, when I make amends, first thing I'm going to do is I'm going to gain consent. I'm going to ask the person if they're open to hearing it. Depending on the circumstances, I will ask, how they would like to hear it, in person, on the phone, in writing. If it's right there in person, I'm going to ask if they're open to hearing it now. The first thing I'm going to share with them is the wrong. What I did. Then I'm going to say *I was wrong*. It's OK to say I'm sorry. It's not OK for me to *simply* say I'm sorry. An apology is *not* an amend. An amend is an attempt to right the wrong, that means I'm going to ask a *question* and the question is “Is there anything I can do to *right* this with you?” Ok now I'm going to show you how not to make an amend. Let's say uhm, my friend Jeffrey here, let's say I called him a name. Let's say, I called him an *asshole*. I know some of you may have a different perspective on this one, but…

**\*Audience member: ‘do it’\***

 **\*general chatter and laughter\***

Ok, here's how not to make it. “Hey, Jeff, come here I got an amend I need to make you. Hey, I'm really sorry the other day I called you an asshole, but you know, I was having a really difficult time, you know…at this time in my life, you know, I'm in therapy right now and I'm working on my family of origin and all these mother issues and all these father issues are coming up, you know, and I just wasn't myself, you know, I didn't get enough sleep the other night because I had to work really late, you know, and I had to take my cat to the veterinarian, you know, and man, I was really upset about that. And, you know, I'm just really sorry for doing that.”

Couple of things. Coupla guidelines to consider. Number one, we *do not offer reasons for our conduct*. We do not offer explanations or excuses for it. We do *not* share our *feelings*. That is not the purpose of making amends. Here is the proper way of making an amend.

“Jeffrey, I have an amend I'd like to make to you, are you open to hearing it?”

**\*Jeffrey: “Yes, I am.”\***

“The other day I called you an asshole and I'm truly sorry. um, I was *wrong* for doing that. You don't deserve to be talked to in that way, and I'd like to know if there's anything I can do to right that with you.”

**\*Jeffrey: “Just don't do it again.” \***

“I'm willing to do that.”

So he says, ‘Please don't do it again.’ That means I have to be willing to follow through. Once again, not one time, in the entire 20 years I've been sober have I heard an unreasonable request, when I followed the outline, as instructed in this book.

When I make that amend I'm not going to *shift* into another dialogue with him and say something like, “By the way, I have some feelings and I need to share with you about what you said to me the other night.” No, if I have something like that to deal with, I'm going to do it at another time. But I'm not going to do it then. This is, what I like to call the freedom step because that's what Step 9 does, it frees me up, frees me up to be able to walk down the street with my head up high, with some dignity and some integrity, because I'm free. These things can no longer block me from God. Now, the thing I've discovered about amends is that I don't like making them. I *still* do not *like* making them. You don't *have* to like it. That's why I'm a lot more careful today when I speak to people. Not because I'm a *nice guy*, because I don't want to make amends later!

Now, this is what I was taught to do. You can take it or leave it. What I do is, I go out and I get myself some 3 by 5 index cards. Or you can get a small pocket tablet like this one. I go back to my inventory, and each person gets *one* card. So if I've harmed John three different ways, John doesn't get three cards. John gets one card. I put the person’s name on it and then I list the harm, *specifically listing the harm*. My amends work is no longer guesswork. I don't have to sit there and try to remember, let's see, did I make that amend? Do I owe that person an amend? See, it's all in writing. I make that amend, I throw that card away. I'm done with that amend.

Another thing I like to do after doing my inventories, I like to sit down and go through my rolodex at home or my address book. Because I will find that I have harmed people *along the way* that did not show up in my inventory and add them to the list. Why do I do this? Because I want to be free. I don't want to be blocked anymore. See if I'm blocked, I'm not gonna stay sober. That's the bottom line. If I'm blocked, I'm *not going to stay sober*. If I'm blocked, I'm not going to stay spiritually fit and I'm not going to be able to be of maximum service to God and you. That's the reason I continue making amends. So, what I'm encouraging you to do this week is to start making your amends. Remember, we don't have to make all the amends at one time. We don't wait until we're done with all our amends and then move on to Step 10. We start making our amends, we immediately move into Step 10. Next week, we'll be covering Steps 10, 11 and 12.

What I'd like to do with the time remaining today is to set the groundwork for doing the 11th Step exercise. You have three handouts

**\*sound of papers shuffling\***

The first one is called The AA Four Standards and The Oxford Group Four Absolutes. Go ahead and pull that one out. Keep in mind that a good portion of what we have in our Big Book and the principles that we have today were taken for…from The Oxford Group. Which the early AA members participated, that's where AA got its start, got its start…was in The Oxford Group and then eventually, the AA members left The Oxford Group and started their own organisation later to be known as Alcoholics Anonymous, and this is what they discovered; see in the…in the Big Book we have what are called The Four Standards at the bottom of the page these are listed on page 67 and page 84.

The *opposite of those* are called The Four Absolutes, which the early AA members obtained from The Oxford Group, they are honesty, purity, unselfish and love. In other words, the opposite of selfish is unselfish, the opposite of dishonesty is honesty, the opposite of resentment is purity, and the opposite of fear is love. Now, the guidance I receive in meditation that is selfish, dishonest, resentful or fearful is clearly guidance that came from me. Guidance that I receive in meditation, which is unselfish, honest, pure and *loving*, I can be assured came from God. And I'm going to walk you through a process that they used early on in AA. First, I'd like to talk just briefly about meditation. We will talk more about this next week. Keep in mind what the authors are saying in Step 11, Step 11 does not say, ‘Sought through *prayer* to improve our conscious contact.’ It says, *‘Sought through prayer and meditation...’* Consider that meditation is *simply listening*. The thing I've discovered about meditation is, that you cannot do it wrong, and you do not need to do it right. What works for one person may not work for another, you need to find a way that works for you, what's most important is that you're willing to try it, and that you're willing to attempt *listening*. See, here's what prayer without meditation is like. Let's say my friend Rusty here calls me up, and invites me to a party to his house. I say, “Great. I'll be right over!” and I hang up before I get directions on how to get there. I'm not going to know which way to go. That's what prayer without meditation is like. I've had that experience in these rooms, not meditating and only praying.

Now, my understanding of a relationship is that it involves two-way communication, that means there's talking and there's listening. So if there's talking and no listening, is that a relationship? No. So you see, I can't really have a relationship with God if all I'm doing is praying. I did that. ‘Yeah, I just thank God in the morning, you know, or ask Him to keep me sober at night. Thank Him for keeping me sober.’ That's not a relationship. In order for me to have a relationship with my friend Diane here, it's necessary that I talk and then I *listen*. That's called two-way communication. So you see, If I'm not practising meditation in addition to the prayer, coupla things are not going to happen. Number one, I'm not going to improve my relationship, nor am I going to receive the knowledge of *His will*, nor am I going to receive the *power* to *carry it out*. So you see, if all I'm doing is praying, I'm still operating on self-will. I make it *sound like* I'm living a spiritual way of life, but I'm really not.

OK, there's one called ‘Meditation’. Please…please pull out that hand out, te top of it is entitled Meditation. Meditation, if I am not receiving thoughts when I listen, the fault is not God's, usually, it is because there is something I will not do. These are typically some of the reasons we are *blocked* during meditation and we're not hearing guidance. Keep in mind that guidance can be…come in the form of intuitive *thought*. Here's one, ‘something wrong in the…in my life that I *will not* face and make right.’ Maybe there's something I'm not willing to face. ‘A habit or indulgence I *will no*t give up.’ *I'm not giving that thing up*. It may block me. ‘A person I will not forgive’. “aww I can't forgive them, look what they did to me, they caused me more harm than I caused them.” Guaranteed to block you. ‘A wrong relationship in my life I will *not* give up.’ “Yeah, but it's my *responsibility* to take care of that daughter or that son of mine.” To an extent. “I can't leave her. I love her too much.” “I can't leave him. I love him too... he *needs* me.” ‘A restitution I will not make.’ “I'm not paying that money back. I don't need to.” ‘Something God has already told me to do that I will not obey.’ Here's a common experience I've had numerous times. I take something to meditation, and I *don't lik*e the guidance I receive. So, I do one of two things. I go out and I do some *poll taking*. And I start asking for other people's feedback. Along the way. And eventually I'm going to find somebody to endorse what I want to do. The other response I have is, ‘I think I need to meditate on that some more.’ I've already received the guidance; I just don't want to do it, for example, on this restitution I will not make. I refuse to make that restitution, and I…and I justify *why I'm not making that amend*. For example, I remember in early sobriety, there was this stereo I wanted to buy. I needed to buy this kick-ass stereo for my apartment. And I had not made some major financial amends. And that's when my sponsor pointed out to me, “Is that your money you're spending?” “Oh, yeah, that's my money, I earned it.” “Really? Don't you owe those people X amount of dollars?” “Well, yeah.” “Then you know whose money you're spending?” “*Theirs*?” Yes, I was spending *their money.* It was *their money,* not mine. Took a while for that one to register. OK, these are some of the reasons, some of the things that can block you in meditation.

OK, basically this is what the early AA members did. Be aware that in the 40s the early AA members, *especially* in the Cleveland and Akron area, did what they called Daily Written Meditation. They did it daily. They prayed and they meditated. After meditating, they pulled out pencil and paper and wrote down *all* the guidance that they received. *No editing*. Write it *all* down. And then, they took those thoughts, that guidance and they tested it against The Four Absolutes. See if it's honest, pure, loving and unselfish I can be assured that it came from God. Keeping in mind that not everything I hear in meditation comes from God. So, what this process will do for you is it will *clearly* identify the origin of your guidance. So, they would take The Four Absolutes and test it against the guidance. This way they could be assured which guidance came from God and which came from them.

Here are some examples on this on this piece of paper, on this handout. Let's assume that this is the guidance you received in your meditation, ‘give them a piece of my mind.’ Is that honest, pure, loving and unselfish? *No*, that came from *me*. Next one, ‘be patient with others today.’ Is that honest, pure, loving and unselfish? Yes, that came from God. ‘I need to avoid that person today.’ Is that honest, pure, loving and unselfish? No. ‘Be kind to others today.’ Is that honest, pure, loving and unselfish? Yes, that came from God. ‘Accept others as they are.’ Is that honest, pure, loving and unselfish? Yes. So here we can be assured which guidance came from me and which came from God. This is what I'm asking you to do. I'm asking you to do it, just for one week, try it for *one* week.

Meditate after you pray. That means *listen*. All the guidance that comes to you, write it down on paper. *Test* the guidance against The Four Absolutes. Come back next week. And though, I understand this is a private matter, personal to you, in your…in your two-way communication with God, I'm going to ask that you come back next week and be willing to share with us the guidance that you received from God, not the guidance you receive from you.

So, what you do is you test it against The Four Absolutes *cross off* the guidance that came from you. The purpose of doing this, is to show you that God *does* exist and that He does communicate to us during meditation. Those of you that are willing to complete this exercise will be a great example, to those in this room that are still doubtful that God communicates to us through meditation. There are a lot of books out there that you can read on meditation. There's one book I would recommend that you get, for meditation and it's a book that has the word ‘meditation’ in it. If it says ‘meditation’, get it. If you don't have information on meditation, it's information that you don't have. There's no right way, there's no wrong way to do this. You have to find a way that works for you. What I did in the beginning was I used the Serenity Prayer for a period of time. I used the 12 Steps. In other words, I would recite all 12 Steps in my head so I can get quiet, you can try using breathing exercises or simply focusing on your breathing. Go through a process where you're relaxing the entire body, you know you're starting to top your head and you're telling yourself, ‘OK I'm gonna relax my head, my neck, my shoulders, my chest, my stomach, etcetera, etcetera.’ Whatever works for you. Personally, I like to have a quiet place, when I do my meditation. I go a place where there's no phones and there's no TV and there's no one knocking on the door. And I go through my prayers and I go through this process of attempting to become quiet and still, in the beginning, it was real difficult. There was a lot of chatter going on in my head, the worst thing we can do during meditation is trying to stop it. *Let it happen.* Don't try to control the chatter in your head.

Couple of things I'm asking you to do this week. Begin making your amends. Practise the daily written meditation. Next week we'll be covering Steps 10, 11, 12, and I would recommend that you read starting with the second paragraph on page 84 up to page 103. That's the second paragraph, on page 84 up to page 103 in preparation for next week.

I'd like to congratulate all of you. I'd like to welcome you to the Fellowship of the Spirit. And welcome you to being rocketed into the Fourth Dimension. Thank you for letting me be of service. And would you please help me close with the Lord's prayer.

**\*Applause\***