Paul Fisher – Tape 4 Transcript

Please help me open today's session with a moment of silent meditation and please allow me to offer a prayer, after I finish that prayer I'll be concluding it 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. Thank you for providing us a place that we can come together. We would like to, thank you God, for those beautiful 12 steps and thank you for allowing each and every one of us for being sober during this day. We humbly ask for your guidance, care; wisdom; direction and love as we walk through these steps today. And God, *please* set aside everything that we think we know about ourselves, the book sobriety, the steps and you God. And God, please help each and every one of us to have an open *mind* today 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, and I'd like to welcome everyone to the 4th session of the uh, Big Book Workshop, where we are taking the 12 steps as outlined in The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, so that we may experience *freedom* from our alcoholism. Today we're going to be covering Steps 10, 11 and 12. Let's turn to page 59*. Step 10 ‘Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.’* Ok, let's move to *page 84,* where Step 10 begins. We're going to go to page 84, paragraph 2*.* That's page 84, paragraph 2.Where the authors say, *‘This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the spirit.’*

So, If I'm actively making my amends, this is what I will experience. I will have entered the world of the spirit. *‘Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.’*

What I find beautiful about..about this paragraph is that the author has given me specific instructions on how to do a daily 10th Step. If you look back at the beginning of this paragraph it says *‘We continued to take personal inventory’* and *‘continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.’* No mention of at the end of the day when I retire but as I go along. In other words, a 10th Step is something I'm going to practise during the day, and the authors give us specific instructions here. They show us how to..how to carry out four spiritual practices.

The first one is watch. If you go down, down 8 lines in that paragraph it says, *‘continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear’.* Have you ever been to the mall and people watch? Or go to the park and you people watch. You don't interact with those people; you just simply observe. That's what watching means. If you want to have a new experience, try practising *watching* for a mere 30 days. Simply watch you, that doesn't mean I analyse what I do. I'm just simply observing, so, I'm watching for four things, and then the authors instruct me what to do when this occurs it says, *‘when these crop up, we ask...’* That's a prayer.  *‘..we ask God at once to remove them.’* So if they crop up, at once I'm going to ask God to remove them. Immediately following it says, *‘we discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone.’* That means I'm going to discuss it with somebody *that day* before I go to bed. And it also says *‘…and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone.’* So you see I have this spot check inventory I can do during the day where I can make amends *immediately.* Then it goes on to say, *‘then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.’* So isn't that beautiful? We have four..we have four spiritual practices that we can do during the day. Watch, ask, discuss and turn.

Now what we have in the next paragraph, are called the 10th Step promises. Now this is providing that I've done everything up to this point. Meaning I've had a 1st Step experience. I found a Power greater than me. I made a decision to give my life *to* that God, I did an inventory, shared it with another person, took the exact nature of my wrongs to God in 6 and 7, compiled my harm list from my inventory, began making my amends, and began practising the 10th Step during the day.

Check out the magnitude of these guarantees as we read on. *‘And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone- even alcohol.’ Wow*. Would you like to be able to stop *fighting* anything or anyone? Does that sound cool or what? *‘For by this time, sanity will have returned.’* I am guaranteed to experience what the authors experienced, that has been my personal experience. I've also had the experience of not experiencing these promises when I don't do the work. *‘We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally…’ Wow!* React sanely and normally, that's so foreign to me *‘…and we will find that this has happened…’* check this out *‘…and we will find that this has happened automatically.’* It doesn't say that I'm making it happen. *‘We will see that our new attitude…’* there's that word again, ***new***. New attitude, not attitude, but ***new*** attitude. That means different than it was before. *‘…toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part.’* In other words, *I'm* not making it happen. All I'm simply doing is I'm just simply doing the footwork.  *‘It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We're not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality- safe and protected.’*

Am I in a position of neutrality? Do I feel safe and protected? *‘We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience.’* Then they go on to tell us, *‘That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.’* They're giving us a little checklist. It has been my experience *personally* as well as observing people I've worked with through the years, in these rooms, that there's fundamentally only one reason why I will drink again. That's because I'm not in fit spiritual condition. If I am in fit spiritual condition, it is impossible for me to drink. My God will not let it happen. Ask yourself, “Well, how am I going to know if I'm fit spiritual condition?” They just got through telling us. This is how we react. So I have a little checklist, let's see if I'm in fit spiritual condition, I go back and I start reading the beginning of that paragraph. Have I ceased fighting anything or anyone? Or am I getting into arguments with people all the time, getting into debates, *gettin on a crusade,* got to convince you this is the way you got to do the program.

It says for this time sanity will..has sanity returned? Are you seldom interested in liquor? And if tempted, have you been able to recoil from it as from a hot flame? Are you reacting sanely and normally? Since we're not fighting it, we feel as though we've been placed in the position of neutrality, safe and protected. *Now,* if I am truly spiritually fit, and if I am truly in a position of neutrality, safe and protected, you know what that means? That means you cannot harm me. If I'm in a position of neutrality, safe and..how are you going to hurt me? What are you going to do, steal my truck? Go ahead, take it! God's just going to give me another one. You want my money? Follow me. Follow me outside of a meeting. You know where it's dark and I go out to my truck and pull out a knife or a gun and say “I want your money.” I say “OK. Here, take it.” Why? Because I'm safe and protected. God's just gunna give me more. I can go anywhere, I've been to places where people told me not to go. Let's take it to the extreme, let's say you get really resentful at me and you decide you want to kill me? Bring it on. I'm just going to a better place. That's what being safe and protected means. It means I’m no longer living in *fear*. That doesn't mean I don't *experience* fear. I'm not *driven* by fear anymore because I..I.. I've become clear as a result of following the recipe in this book, that I'm a spiritual being with a human condition. Which means I'm going to have, human reactions. I'm going to experience sadness, grief, anger, disappointment. So on and so forth, but that's..that’s..that’s natural and normal for me.

Next paragraph, *‘It's easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels.’* Here the authors are emphasising, that this is about action.  *‘We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. “How can I best serve thee? Thy will (not mine) be done.” These are thoughts which must go with us constantly. We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.’* Here the authors are..are..are clearly explaining to me, to conform my will with God's is the proper use of the will. Check it out. *‘We can exercise our willpower along this line all we wish.’* What line? Thy will be done, not mine. So to conform my will with His it says, *‘It is the proper use of the will.’* I'm supposed to use my will. Provided I am spiritually fit, provided that I'm having a spiritual experience, provided that I've done the previous 10 Steps. So I'm supposed to use my will, we're not a bunch of aumatons. I’m supposed to use my brain, God gave me brains for a reason.

OK, in *Step 10* back there on page 84 in the second paragraph where it says, it suggests *‘we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.’* Those of you that are *willing* to practise a daily 10th Step, why don't you go ahead and recite that out loud with me. Starting with the second line in the second paragraph on page 84, so *paragraph two, second line, page 84.* Ready?

\***All Reciting**\*

*“We continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.”* Congratulations.

**\*Applause\***

All right, we've completed Step 10. So let's flip back to page 59. So that we can read Step 11. *‘Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.’* Ok, back here on page 85, paragraph two. Page 85, paragraph two. It says, *‘Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power.’* Notice the authors don't say that He has a lot of knowledge and power. It says He has *all* knowledge and power. Now, if I have a resource available to me that has *all* knowledge and power, what would be the best place to go for direction? That Source, *exactly.* You know what I find really *ironic* in these rooms? And I have had this experience so many times. The very thing that has caused me more difficulty and pain and suffering has been my own head. And you know what's really interesting about that, I get a problem, you know the first place I go for a solution, is my head! Now is that..is that insane or what? The thing that caused me more suffering and pain and humiliation when I came into these rooms, the old ideas, beliefs and attitudes and perceptions, that simply did not work, that is the first place I go for a solution when I have a problem.

So if I'm truly self-delusional, we read that didn't we? Back in the 2nd and the 3rd Step that *‘we are driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-pity and self-seeking.’* Correct? So if I'm truly *driven* by self-delusion, how am I going to know if I'm self-deluded? I'm not going to know. That's like going to a fish and asking it “What is water?” The fish will say, “Well, you know it’s..it's everywhere!”

Think about the weight of that statement. If I'm self-delusional how am I going to know if I'm self-deluded? I'm not going to know. That's why it's absolutely essential that this alcoholic maintain the strict disciplines of 10, 11 and 12. Can I rely on *my* interpretation? *My* perception of my own experience? Maybe I need other people, maybe I need access to a God of my understanding so that I can seek this knowledge and power. Ok, then the author is going to say, *‘If we have…’* *Whoa*, there's that word again! ‘*If we have carefully…* doesn't say if we follow directions. *‘If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us.’* What a promise! *‘To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.’* Now, how many of you have gone to meetings and you've heard somebody speak and they picked the topic: *‘I'd like to hear your experience with your sixth sense’*? It's right there in the book, I mean the authors are telling us *‘we have begun to develop this vital…’* Do you know what vital means? Essential for life. So, am I going to be able to *live* in sobri… so, I'm not talking about not drinking. I'm talking about *living* here. I'm talking about being free. Being free from my own *mind*, my own *fears*, inadequacy, self-doubts, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

This vital sixth sense, so this sixth sense is absolutely essential for my life and sobriety. I'm encouraging all of you that are experiencing this vital sixth sense that you take that back to your meetings and start talking about it. Start sharing with people *your* own *experience* with your vital sixth sense. *‘But we must go further, and that means more action.’* My 20 years of sobriety is not going to keep me spiritually fit. Now the *truth* is, I don't *want* to do these disciplines. I would love to be able to sit home with my 20 years of sobriety, and flip the old watch-a-ma-call-it from channel to channel and drink my Sprite and be spiritually fit. Oh, I'd love to be able to do that. But that's not what my experience shows me. Am I *willing* to do the disciplines? Yes. *Why* do I do them? Couple of reasons. Not because I'm a truth seeker. There are no truth seekers in Alcoholics Anonymous. We're comfort seekers. That's why I maintain the disciplines, because I enjoy the comfort, the peace of mind, the serenity, the freedom, the reprieve from alcohol; being in a position of neutrality, safe and protected, that's why I do the disciplines on a regular basis. Not because I *want* to do them. It's because, I enjoy feeling comfort and that's what these disciplines do for me.

Let's read on. *‘Step Eleven suggests prayer, meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.’* That is what is most important about prayer and meditation, is that I have a proper attitude and I'm willing to work *at* it. *‘It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.’* Here is where the authors very clearly describe the evening review, and they give us a hint. Now remember we are at Step 11, correct? In the book, right? And then it says in the very *next paragraph, ‘When we retire at night...’* That's a clue. So, if I'm going to *retire* at night then these are the questions I'm going to ask myself in my evening review. I’m going to ask myself the same four questions that I asked myself as I go through the day as I go along in Step 10. *‘Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?’* There's a question mark that means it's a stop sign, I'm going to stop, I'm going to answer those questions. *‘Do we owe an apology?’* There's another question mark. *‘Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once?’* Another question mark. *‘Were we kind and loving toward all?’* Another question mark.  *‘What could we have done better?’* Another question mark. *‘Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?’* That does not mean, do as much as you possibly can and complete as many tasks as possible, that has not been my understanding of ‘pack as much as I can into the stream of life’. What I'm hearing from that, is where was I helpful? Who did I help? *‘But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection…’* Here's the warning, you know, we're not here to beat ourselves up, simply do a constructive review of my day. *‘…for that would diminish our usefulness to others.’* So you see, I'm not useful to other people if I'm just simply sitting there beating myself up. I'm simply reviewing my day per these questions.

Ok, here are the instructions. After I do my review, the authors are asking me to do *two* things in the next sentence. *‘After making our review we ask…’* That sounds like a prayer, doesn't it? *‘…We ask God's forgiveness.’* In other words, you know, umm ‘Yeah, I was thinking mostly of myself today God, please forgive me for doing so.’ ‘No, I wasn't kind and loving towards all, please forgive me.’ And then ..and then there's that word *and, and,* which means in addition to, that means I'm going to do something in addition to prayer. *‘…Inquire what corrective measures should be taken.’* So, if I'm gonna inquire what corrective measures should be taken, that implies *I'm going to listen*. In other words, after I do my evening review, I'm going to pray *and* meditate. We talked about that last week, how essential it is for me to meditate in addition to pray. You see, if all I'm doing is praying, I'm not completing step 11 in its entirety. Notice the wording of Step 11 *‘Sought through…’* doesn't say ‘sought through prayer to improve my conscious contact’, so you see if all I'm doing is praying and not meditating, am I going to improve my relationship with God? Am I going to receive the knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out? My experience has been *no*. If my friend Scott here calls me up and invites me to his house for a party, and I hang up the phone before I receive directions, I'm not going to know which way to go to get there. That's what prayer without meditation is like. I've created a lot of unmanageability in my life in sobriety as a result of *not* meditating on something, but rather praying. I had made decisions based on self which later placed me in a position to be hurt. That's how essential it is for me to practise daily meditation. So, isn't this beautiful? They're giving us a specific outline of how to do evening review, and they're giving the instructions to pray and meditate when I finish my evening review.

Next paragraph. They show us, how to do *morning* meditation. They give us a clue when to do it in the first two words. *On awakening ‘On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day.* Before we begin,’ we say a prayer. It says *‘we ask…’* There's a prayer. *‘We ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions, we can employ our mental faculties...’* Here the authors are implying we are supposed to use our brains, *‘employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.’*

After Step 9, you may notice that the authors have made a shift, 4 through 9 is about conduct, it's about where I was wrong, where I've caused harm, where I've been selfish, where I've been self-seeking, where I've been dishonest, etcetera, etcetera. Now the authors have moved into the thought life. After all it does say on page 23 that *‘…the main problem of the alcoholic centres in his mind, rather than in his body.’*  Isn't that correct? So what do I..what..what needs more attention? My *mind.*  It's the main problem, so here are.. the authors have made a shift now they're shifting into ‘let's concentrate on our *thought* life.’

*‘Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.’* This helps me to address the self-delusion. *‘In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask…’* There's another prayer. *‘…God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while’.* Notice that the authors are not instructing me to ask God to keep me sober. If I truly believe, if I truly conceded to my innermost self that I have *no powe*r over alcohol. And there's absolutely nothing I can do to keep me sober. And I'm sober. And, I've come to believe in a Power greater than myself and I made a decision to give my life to that, what's keeping me sober? Is it me? Is it that relationship? Is it work? Maybe it's your income. That has not been my experience. So, if I've applied those principles, if I've followed that recipe in this book, up to this point, and God is keeping me sober, why do I need to go to Him and ask Him to keep me sober?

Consider this for a moment, my wife is in the kitchen and she's washing dishes and I go in and I say, “Jan, would you wash the dishes please?” She's likely to frown at me, I'm certain she will frown. She's gonna give me that look like *I'm already doing it.* Why are you *asking* me to do something I'm *already* doing? You see, I became..I fell victim to that for a long time at the time I was bouncing in and out of these rooms. ‘Yes, I ask God to keep me sober every day.’ To my knowledge this book doesn't say anything about *not* drinking one day at a time. To say that I am not going to drink one day at a time implies that I still have some reservation. That has been my experience with rela... I hear that from relapsers a lot. “Yeah, I'm asking God to keep me sober, day at a time. Every morning I ask Him, "Keep me sober.” Why? He's already doing it. They're instructing me to follow directions, a plan of action to direct my thinking.

Let's go ahead and check that out, let's see what the book has to say about it. Ok. Here we go. Turn to page 33. Page 33, paragraph one, line 9. Page 33, paragraph one, line 9. *‘If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.’* No reservation. I'm going to jump ahead here just to illustrate a point. Here we go, page 90, paragraph 3. Page 90, paragraph 3, line 6. That's line 6. *‘Then let his family or a friend ask him if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so.’*

You see, what happened to *me* in that period of time that I was bouncing in and out of these rooms and couldn't stay sober, was that I was not willing to quit for good. I was not willing to go to God and ask Him to remove it ***for good***. Now, to say that I'm willing to give it up for good does not imply that I have power to keep me sober, what that does imply is, I'm willing to go to *any length* to stay sober, that means I'm going to resort to any spiritual principle I possibly *can* in order to not drink. Because I don't have the power to keep me sober. So that means I need to call on the Power from a God of my understanding. If you're having resistance to this, I simply ask you to consider if you have had that experience. Without exception, every time I go to a meeting, go to a round up, convention and I hear a speaker say something that I have resistance to, most of the time it is because I have not *experienced* it.

When I heard people say things like they felt safe and protected, they were in a position of neutrality, that they stopped fighting everybody and everything, I had resistance to that. You know why? Because I never had the experience! How many people in here can tell me about bungee jumping? I have experience with bungee jumping! So what can you tell me about, bungee jumping? Nothing. You have nothing to offer me about bungee jumping because you have no experience with it. You can share a lot of *opinions*, a lot of *ideas*, a lot of *perceptions*, but do you have any experience with it? I have some personal experience with that. I know what it's like. I wouldn't do it again. One time was enough for me. But it was a positive experience, I'm not going to go into that right now.

But the point I'm trying to make.. You know, in early sobriety I found it necessary to ask God to help me stay sober, because I had not had a spiritual awakening yet. I had not dialled into God's power. See, that's why it's absolutely essential, that we be taken through these steps as *quickly* as possible. See, I'm the *real* alcoholic that they talk about on page 21. Given sufficient reason isn't going to keep me sober. I need to get to the power, and I need to get to it ***now!*** Now, it has been my experience you cannot take anybody through these steps *too quickly*. However, you can take them through *too slowly*. Maybe that has something to *do* with the decreased success rate within the rooms of our meetings. ***My God,*** how did these guys *have* a 75 to 93% success rate, especially in the Cleveland and Akron area? What were they doing that we're not doing? Give this some serious thought for a moment. Medicine has *made* major advancements since 1939, 1944. There are treatment centres. They didn't *have* treatment centres then; they had drying out hospitals where they detox people. Psychology has made a lot of advancements since then, and yet the success rate in AA is lower today than it was then, and they had fewer resources! But the resources, that were available to the Alcoholics in 1944 are the same resources that are available to us today; and it's called the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. It's called the spiritual principles that are contained within the first 103 pages, giving me the instructions on how to do The 12 Steps.

Before we get into uh, *The Promises,* which is at the top of page 87, the promises of prayer and meditation, I..I'll share with you what I personally do. I don't ask God to keep me sober. He's already *doing it*. Keep in mind, I have to keep..I have to do my part.

So basically what *I* do is this, I follow the instructions on this page. The first thing to do is I ask God to direct my thinking, especially that it be *‘… divorced of self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives’.* Then I say another prayer. I ask for *‘…Inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision…’* today. Then I ask God to help me to *relax*, *take it easy* and *not struggle*. And that's when I move into my meditation for listening. And that's when I ask “What would you have me be today?” Today the guidance that I receive is rather simple. I typically receive guidance like ‘enjoy yourself today.’ ‘Be kind and patient with other people.’ ‘*Listen.’*  If you will practise this prayer and meditation, I can guarantee you, your life will change in a relatively short period of time. Try not to misunderstand me, I'm not saying that sobriety is solely contingent *on* prayer *and* meditation. I need to practice *all* the principles, not just those, but those have been very instrumental in my life. And as I stated last week, there's no *right* way to meditate and there's no wrong way. What you need to do is find a way that works for you. Let's look at the promises. It says, *‘What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration. …’* Here they are instructing us to be patient.  *‘…gradually becomes a working part of the mind.’* Once again, notice the authors are putting emphasis on the thought life. *‘Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times.’* So I'm not inspired at all times I tell myself ‘Oh it's not working’ Remember what we read at the beginning of this, it works if we have the proper attitude and work at it. *‘We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless...’* Here's the thought life again. *‘…we find that our thinking will as time passes, be more and more on the plain of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.’* Isn't that beautiful? My thinking's going to change. They're telling me *be patient*. I'm not going to be inspired at all times. Now I'm going to finish prayer and meditation, then we're going to take *more* action.

In the next paragraph. *‘We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer…’* So I'm going to pray, meditate, pray, in the morning . *‘…that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask...’* Here's a prayer, *‘We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.’*

That's one of the things I love about Steps 10, 11. They guarantee that I'm going to make mistakes. That's why I need those bookends, isn't that beautiful? I got two beautiful bookends, I have a bookend in the morning where I'm gonna do prayer and meditation, prayer. I'm going to do a daily 10th Step during the day, as I go along and at night I'm going to do an evening review and I'm going to do prayer meditation when I finish. This has been my experience, I will only experience one of two things within the rooms of AA. I'm either getting better or I'm getting worse, there is no in between. No one to my knowledge has ever coasted uphill. It's real easy to spot people who are doing these disciplines. They don't take themselves so seriously, they seem to enjoy life much more fully. They *laugh* more, they make fun of themselves. You know why it's important for us to not..not take ourselves seriously? Because we are the joke. We are it. We are the joke, that's why I can't take myself seriously. Another reason is you're not going to.

During the week I asked you to, uh, consider doing the, uh, written meditation exercise, where you write down the guidance, that you received during meditation, and then test it against the four absolutes. I'm asking for any volunteers, anybody who would be willing to share the guidance that they received this week. I understand that this is a personal matter, in two-way communication with the God of your understanding. I'm hoping those of you that did do it would be willing to come forward and share with us the guidance you received from *God*, in order to show yourself and other people, that guidance does come during meditation. Do I have any volunteers? Come on up.

**\*Audience member\***

*“My name is Joseph and I'm an alcoholic and addict.”*

**\*Audience responds\***

“Hello Joseph”

*“Very grateful to be alive today, umm, I had the most major and profound contact from my Higher Power this past week. Umm, I've been a sober member of AA for a little over seven months now. My father's coming out, to visit me from New York and, erh, him and his mother or..him and his wife asked me to go up to Las Vegas for the weekend with a bunch of my uncles and so forth and uh..well in this meditation this morning it just it came to me out of nowhere, that I wasn't ready to go to erh, Arizona or me to go to Las Vegas and erh, so I went right to the four, you know, absolutes, then I had to think about my son, who has been asking me, you know, twice a week ‘When am I coming home to see him?’ So I had to say to myself, you know, if I go to Las Vegas, I love to gamble and I love women and I want to spend a lot of money that I don't really have. And I'd really like to go see my son so that was my unselfish thing from God. And I had to be honest with my father and his girlfriend also that, you know, maybe it wasn't the right time for me to go there. Will this choice bring me happiness or will bring others around me happiness? And I said ‘Yes, this is going to bring me happiness and it's going to bring others around me happiness by me not going there’ and I got a lot of comfort out of this decision. That's the most important thing, I think, because erh, you know, I was delusional, very delusional. I realise that and I'm just really grateful to be here and thank you for listening.”*

**\*Applause\***

I’d like to thank those of you who uh, were willing to share with us the guidance that you received from God.

Step 12, *‘Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practise these principles in all our affairs.’* The first part implies, having had a spiritual awakening as *the result*. Doesn't say *a* result, it says *the* result of these steps. The second part is we try to carry this message to alcoholics, and the third part is to practise these principles in all our affairs. You see, what I've discovered is that the real work is Step 12. You see, what the steps do is they prepare me to do the *real work* and that's what we're going to talk about today, there's an ent..there's a chapter, Chapter 7, beginning on page 89, which is entirely devoted to working with others. Numerous times through the years I've heard people say, “You know, I really wish we had some literature on sponsorship.” We have a whole *chapter* on sponsorship, it's called *‘Working with Others’.*

What I love about this chapter is that the authors give me *specific*, clear-cut directions. What to say, what not to say. What to do, what not to do. When to do it, when not to do it. If you haven't read this chapter, I would strongly encourage you to do so. We're going to, uh, cover some of the highlights of this. Let's start with uh, page 89, paragraph one. Page 89, paragraph one. *‘PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE shows that nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.’* So maybe it's essential that I work with other people. Page 90, paragraph one. *Page 90, paragraph one.* *‘When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him.’* In other words, *let him talk, let her talk,* find out who it is you're dealing with. What this does for me is gives me some perspective, which direction to take. *‘If he does not want to stop drinking, don't waste time trying to persuade him.’* It's a waste of time to work with someone who doesn't..who's not willing to work with you. Because when I do that, I'm depriving another alcoholic *and* I am depriving me.

Ok,paragraph two, page 90. *‘If there is any indication that he wants to stop, have a good talk with the person most interested in him- usually his wife. Get an idea of his behaviour, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition, and his religious leanings. You need this information to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if the tables were turned.’* Once again, we want to get as much information as we can about the person. *Next paragraph six lines down. ‘Then let his family or friend ask him if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so.’* How many people in here want to quit for *good*? Are you willing to go to *any* extreme to do so? Page 91, paragraph three. Page 91, paragraph three*. ‘See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself.’* If he… if we are encouraging him to speak, that means we're going to listen, we're not gonna sit down and preach to the person and tell them, “This is what you need to do.” *‘If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed. If he is not communicative, give him a sketch of your drinking career up to the time you quit.’* This is very important *‘But say nothing, for the moment, of how that was accomplished. If he is in a serious mood dwell on the troubles liquor has caused you, being careful not to moralise or lecture. If his mood is light, tell him humorous stories of your escapades. Get him to tell some of his. When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter On Alcoholism. If he is alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own. If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. Show him from your own experience…’* That's what we stick to our own experience. ‘…how the queer mental condition surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power. Don't at this stage, refer to this book, unless he has seen it and wishes to discuss it. And be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion.’ So when I work with new guys, I go into it *not* assuming that they're alcoholic. What I do is I go into it giving them the dignity of finding *the* truth about their experience.

Next paragraph, page 92, which is paragraph two*. ‘Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep his attention focused mainly on your personal experience.’* That's why I'm there to share my experience, not my opinions, not my ideas, not what church he should go to, who he should be married to or not be married to, what job he should have, that’s..that's none of my business.

Page 93, third line from the top. Now, notice before we read this, up to this point basically all we've done is *listened*. I'm swapping experiences with him I'm sharing some of my mental inconsistencies, the mental obsession, some of the things that occurred to me, when I was drinking. And then they tell us this, third line from the top of page 93. *‘Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely.’* So you see up to this point I'm not going to even have mentioned it. *‘If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him.’* So you see, his understanding of God doesn't have to make sense to me, what's most important is that it makes sense to him. *‘The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself, and that he live by spiritual principles.’*

Ok, turn to page 95, paragraph two. Page 95, paragraph two. *‘If he is not interested in your solution, if he expects you to act only as a banker for his financial difficulties or a nurse for his sprees, you may have to drop him until he changes his mind.’* I'm not a banker, I'm not a hotel. I'm there to share my experience, strength and hope with him. Page 96, paragraph one.

Page 96, paragraph one*. ‘Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.’*

Sounds like Bill Wilson. First twelve guys that he worked with didn't stay sober, he was disappointed, he went back to his wife Lois and said, “You know, I've been talking to these drunks and none of them are staying sober.” She said, “Well, you are!” So you see, when I work with others, it *does not matter* whether they stay sober. It *does not matter* if they follow through. It *does not matter* if they call. If they don't want..if they're not willing to work with me, I find another person.

Notice also, it doesn't say anywhere in this book, to my knowledge, that I go to meetings and I kick back and I wait for the newcomer to come to me. Where would this program be if Bill Wilson and Doctor Bob did that? If they sat home and said you know, “Nope, the phone hasn't rang.” They sought them out. Have you ever noticed newcomers in meetings raising their hands and saying, “Hi, my name is John. I'm an alcoholic and I need a sponsor. I need to work with somebody.” You know what I do when they ask, “Are there any other AA announcements?” I raise my hand, “Hi, I'm Paul. I'm an alcoholic and uh, I need to work with somebody and take them through the Steps, so, if there's anyone here that needs to be taken through the steps please see me after the meeting.” I have a responsibility, to be available to the newcomer. That means I'm not going to wait for them to come to me. I'm simply sharing with you what I was taught to do by my first sponsor. So, when I'm at a meeting, there might be ten people there that I want a hug from, that I'm close to. But if there are newcomers there and they stand up, I'm gonna ask them “Do you have a sponsor?” And if they say, “No”, I don't ask them if they want one. That's.. I'm telling..that's what my book says. I don't ask if they want a sponsor, I assign myself. I say, “Well you got one now, I'm your sponsor.” “ What if I don't want you to be my sponsor?” “Well, then go get another one.” But the point is I'm taking responsibility, for carrying the message of hope to the alcoholic. “Hey, let's go grab some coffee. You open to doing that?” Then we sit down, and I do as outlined in this book. Sit down and get more information from the person, find out who it is I'm dealing with. See, I don't know about the rest of you, I wanna stay sober I wanna be free. I cannot be free, by not working with others. My 20 years of sobriety will *not* keep me sober. Sobriety does *not* keep me sober. That's..that’s simply a gift. That gift isn't going to keep me sober. Remember, I'm a real alcoholic, I can't survive on the food I received yesterday. I need *new* spiritual food today. And I can't rely on what I did yesterday, to maintain what I'm experiencing today.

Here's something to consider - what would happen to AA if everybody in AA did sobriety the way you're doing it today? What would happen to AA if *everybody* in AA was doing sobriety the way *you're* doing it today? I have a responsibility when I go to meetings today, to carry a message of hope, what that means is this: I am not there to talk about my problems. That's what sponsors are for, that's what coffee before the meeting, coffee after the meeting is for. Stop and think about it, you go to a meeting, you dump, you whine, you complain, you got some new person in there, do you think that person wants to come back? The point I'm trying to make is this - those of us that have gone through the steps and have had a spiritual awakening, we have a responsibility, to carry hope to the meetings. So when that newcomer comes in and he hears hope, he wants..he or she wants to return to that meeting. “I'm coming back to this meeting. I heard a lot of hope.”

Page 97, paragraph one, line two. Page 97, paragraph one, line two. *‘Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights’ sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business.’* So ask yourself, do I have a foundation stone? Am I working with others? Am I helping other people? Page 98, paragraph one, line eight. *Page 98, paragraph one, line eight. ‘Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job - wife or no* [*wife] - we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.’* My sobriety is not contingent on my sponsor, it's not dependent on him, it's important that I have one. It's important I maintain contact with him. *‘Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.’*

Last line on page 99. Last line on page 99. *‘Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God.’* Notice it does not say that it is dependent on God. It is dependent upon his *relationship*. Now, this is where prayer and meditation comes back in, if I'm going to have a relationship with someone, that assumes that I'm going to spend time with them, is that correct? So, if I'm going to have a relationship with my friend Michael here, that means I need to spend time with him. I need to talk to him, and I need to listen. A relationship isn't where I'm doing all the talking, that's not a relationship. A relationship involves talking and listening.

Paragraph one, page 100. *‘Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen.’* If I persist. *Remarkable*. *‘When we look back, we realised that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!’*

Page 102. Page 102, paragraph two. *‘Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful.’* So, if I'm doing *the work*, which is working with others, I'm carrying the message, not the mess, not my opinions, not my ideas. What I've *learned* as a result of going through these steps on a repeated basis and continuing to work with others, is that when I sponsor someone, I have only three responsibilities, only three. Take them through the 12 Steps. Tell them the truth and love them. To love them, simply means *let them be right where they are.* It's important for me to let the guys I sponsor, to let them struggle, I'm not there to repair their struggles. Which reminds me of a story of a little boy who goes out to the woods, and he sees a butterfly in a cocoon struggling to get out. He decides to help the butterfly. So he pulls out his pocket knife and he opens up the cocoon so the butterfly can get all the way out. The butterfly is able to get all the way out of the cocoon and then he falls to the ground and dies. The little boy runs home, and he asks his father, he says, “Daddy. Daddy. I tried to help this butterfly, and he died. What happened?” And the father says, “Well Son, you know that Butterfly needed to struggle so it could develop the strength, so it could fly.”

I have no desire to get in the middle of someone's experience. I take the person through the steps, it's not my job to continue to go back and hound them and remind them, “Are you doing those amends?” That's not my job. This is what my sponsor did for me, he sat me down, basically, he did wha..how it's outlined in this book and he got a good idea of what I would, you know..what my drinking and, of course, my using was like at the time and he asked me a couple of simple questions. He said, “Are you willing to go at any length to have a spiritual experience?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “Are you willing to do everything I ask you to do with no debate?” Ooh..he says, “Well, are you willing to consider that uh my judgement about your life is infinitely better than yours?” After all, I'd been bouncing in and out of AA for 12 years. “Yeah, but you don't understand. I've been around these rooms for a long time.”

That was the problem, I've been around. I had not been in it. And you could always..you could always spot me in a meeting. You could tell I was a relapser and you could tell that I was operating on self-will cus I would say things like, “Yeah, I put together X amount of sobriety.” That was the problem, I put it together. I said, “Yeah, but I've been around these rooms, for a long time. He said “No wait a minute.” He said “You have absolutely nothing we want. You have absolutely nothing to offer us.” He said “What do you have to offer us? Do you have any experience in living a spiritual way of life?” “Well, you know, I know something about spiritual *living*, you know, and it says that…” And he said, “Yeh..yeh but wait a minute. Do you have any experience?” “No” He said, “I'll tell you what…” He said, “I want you to go to meetings and I want you to shut up and don't talk, because you have nothing to offer until you go through all 12 Steps and you have a spiritual awakening. Then you will have something to offer.” He says “By the way….” He said, “All that drinking you did, you know, and putting those needles in your arms and carrying those weapons and all that…” He said, “If we need any help in that area, *we'll call on you*. In the meantime, just go to meetings and listen.” I'll tell you it was tough, because you know, I had some great ideas and you people needed to hear about ‘em. I had a lot of ideas, but the point is, in the twelve years I was bouncing in and out of the rooms I was going around sharing opinions on experiences I never had. You start talking about the 4th Step, I’d share it, “Yeah, this is what I think about the 4th Step.” I had no experience with it. It's like you coming up to me and trying to tell me about bungee jumping, you don't have a clue, you have no experience with it. You have you have..have experience in an area. If you have experience with making amends, I'm going to come to you and ask you, if you have experience, with repairing relationships, with taking care of finances, etcetera, etcetera, I'm going to go to you, I'm going to seek you out. What he did is he took me through those steps really quick; less than six weeks and he cut me loose, said, “Ok, I want you to start working with others.” My…. I was, I was f..I was terrified. “Oh my God, I'm going to *kill* someone.” No I'm not. I had an experience, I had a spiritual awakening, and I got a lot of flack from people, saying, “You haven't been sober long enough.” But where does it say that in our book, that we have to be sober one year before we start sponsoring others? Bill Wilson wasn't sober a year. Doctor Bob wasn't sober a year when he started carrying the message. The only prerequisite, is that I have gone through all 12 Steps and I've had a spiritual awakening. Now I have something to offer. Now I have the message. And I've had experience with sharing the mess, and it was not helpful. Sharing your experience and the solution in this book with another suffering alcoholic, you will not want to miss. Attempts to convey to you the excitement and the joy and the jubilation of..of..of sharing with another alcoholic is hard to *convey* if you haven't had the *experience.* Only the people who have done it will truly understand what it's like, it's an absolute joy to work with other alcoholics.

Now, my mind doesn't always say that. I mean I've sponsored guys through the years who, you know, who are like emotional vampires, the kind of person you put in your car, and you're driving down the street and the street lights dim every time you drive under ‘em. You know, you say, “Oh, God, I don't want to spend time with *him”*. Because I'm gonna go there and I have to listen to all this whining and then I’ll have to turn around and call my sponsor and whine about his whining. Which is something we all do, you know, and I'm on the way there and I'm thinking “Geez, I don’t want to be with this guy, you know, he's in..he’s in victim posture and he's going to whine, he's gunna start talking about this.” And yeah, look at my watch and think, “I'm going to miss that game. I'm gonna have to get the score.” You know, “I'm going to miss out on that.” You know, and I get there and invariably sometime in the *middle* of doing the step work, something magical happens. And I start to have gratitude and I'm thankful. And spontaneously this prayer goes off in my head that says ‘Thank you God. Thank you for allowing me to be here.’ And I..and I walk away and my cup..my cup is full. And then next week I go through it all over again, you know. But it's from the experience. So you see, it doesn't matter what my mind tells me, it's from the experience, of the transformation that I experienced as a result of continuing to work with others. You see, the newcomer is the lifeblood and the old timer is the *heart* and neither one can survive without the other. I need the newcomer and the newcomer needs the old timer. So you see we're in this thing together, kind of reminds me of an experience that I had watching uh the Discovery Channel. They had these buffalo these..it was in Africa, these African Buffalo. And they were all..this herd of them was going through a pasture and on the perimeter of the pasture, were these lions. And the lions were just laying there, not even moving a muscle. And then all of a sudden, one of the buffalo left the herd and immediately the lions pounced on him and killed him. And I looked at that and I thought, “*Wow*, that's just like AA.” When I stick with the herd, I'm Ok. But the moment I leave the herd, I'm *dead meat.*

I'd like to welcome all of you to the 4th dimension. Before we close tonight there are a couple of things that we're going to go over. Why don't you pull out your questionnaire, that we reviewed in our first session. These were ‘Questions on beliefs in AA’ that we were being asked to answer true or false before and after our step work. The purpose of this, is to see if there was any change in what..in what you believe. It's entitled ‘Questions on beliefs in AA’. Ok. True or false? ‘If we are planning to stop drinking, all we have to do is not drink one day at a time’. True or false?

**\*audience members and PF\***

False.

On page 33 it says, *‘If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.’* Next one, ‘Once I take the steps, I will have a partnership with my Higher Power.’

**\*Audience members and PF\***

False.

Look what it says on page 62 and 63, let's take a look. It’s telling me on page 62 and 63 that, *‘He is the principal and I am His agent’* Does that sound like a partnership? Page 63 they’re telling me that I want to have a new employer does that sound like a partnership? If He has all the power, does that sound like a partnership? Nope. You ever seen that bumper sticker: God is my co-pilot! Oh my *goodness!* That sounds *dangerous!* God is my copilot. If God’s my copilot who's driving the *car*? *Who's in charge?* *Me!!! Oh oh, look out!* Ok. Oh boy.

Next one ‘Once I fully understand God I will be free from my alcoholism.’

**\*Audience members and PF\***

False,

wonder why? Let's see what it says in the book. Can I fully understand God? No. It's impossible, isn't it? For me to understand..fully understand, God is to be God. I still don't understand God. Ok, ‘The Big Book is the only book I need to read.’ We just read that on page 87 where the authors are suggesting that we read outside literature. Next one, ‘It is not necessary to do Step 4 more than once.’ True or false? What do you think? False. Page 71, *‘If you have already made a decision…’* that's Step 3 *‘…and an inventory of your grosser handicaps…’*  that's Step 4 *‘…you have made a good beginning.’* Doesn't say we're *finished*. There is no way I'm going to uncover everything I need to uncover that blocks me from God in *one* inventory.

‘We can win the confidence of another alcoholic by relating to their experiences.’ Let me read it again, ‘We can *win* the confidence of another alcoholic by relating to their experiences.’ What do you think, true or false? Hmm? What do you think?

**\*Audience member\***

“They have to relate to our experience.”

**\*PF\***

They have to relate to *our* experience?

Let's see what the book says. Page 18, if you'd like to know where..where the answer to this is. In the italicised part it says, *‘But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution…’* they're talking about what? The spiritual solution *‘…who is properly armed with facts about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.’* So you see, I have to have..have found a solution and be properly armed with *facts* about myself.

Next one, ‘Our..our purpose in sobriety is to get back into the mainstream of life.’ True or false? What is our..what is our purpose? Hmm?

**\*indistinct murmuring from audience\***

Yeah… *‘Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.’* That's on page 77. Next one, ‘There are many different ways you can work this program.’ True or false?

**\*Audience members and PF\***

False.

It's really clear on *page ..uh..* 58. The very first thing we hear in ‘How It Works’ in every single meeting, *‘Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.’* Path doesn't have an ‘S’ on it. Next one, ‘Our sobriety is our greatest possession.’ What do you think? Is our sobriety our greatest possession?

**\*indistinct murmuring from audience\***

Hmm? Let me share with what..share with you what it says on page 124. *‘The Alcoholic’s past thus becomes the principal asset of the family and frequently it is almost the only one! Cling to the thought that, in God's hands, the dark past is the great possession you have…’ Wow* *‘…the key to life and happiness for others.’* So my greatest possession is my *past*. It's not my sobriety. ‘The authors and..of the Big Book encourage us to drink’. True or false? What do you think? *Page 31,* let's see what the.. what the book..what the authors say. *‘Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking.’* That sounds like encouragement to *me*. They're encouraging me to go out and try some controlled drinking. See, the authors are trying to find out. Are you really an alcoholic? Do you really have no power? Ok, next one. ‘Our main focus needs to be on the alcoholic, not on their family.’ True or false? ‘Our main focus needs to be on the alcoholic, not on their family.’ Let's see what it says in the Big Book. On page 97it says, *‘Though an alcoholic does not respond, there is no reason why you should neglect his family. You should continue to be friendly to them. The family should be offered your way of life.’* We don't hear enough of this in meetings. I've had, many opportunities in sobriety to go out and work with *the family,* when the alcoholic wasn't willing, to seek a solution, so we need to be willing to offer that to the family as well.

Next one, ‘It takes a long time to recover from alcoholism.’ Maybe it's true. What do you think? ‘It takes a long time to recover from alcoholism.’ So if it took a long time how come it didn't take Doctor Bob and Bill Wilson very long? Let's see what the book says on page 118. *‘We do not like the thought that the contents of a book or the work of another alcoholic has accomplished in a few weeks that for which we struggled for years.’*

Another quote, page 158. See what it says over here *‘On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary. His wife came, scarcely daring to be hopeful, though she thought she saw something different about her husband already.’ Wow ‘He had begun to have a spiritual experience.’* You, in this workshop have had personal experience, in a matter of four weeks, you've gone through all the 12 steps. Ok the next one, ‘The steps are not required, they are suggested.’ That's a tricky one, isn't it?

**\*indistinct murmuring from audience\***

Somebody said true? Well, it does say, in Chapter 5 that the steps are suggested, correct? Let's see what it says in another place in the book, page 25*. ‘Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the levelling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation.’* So if I'm going to succeed, the Steps are required for me, they are not suggested, reminds me of a story, this guy was telling. He was telling me about a friend of his, who conducted skydiving, and in his hanger he had all these parachutes hanging on the wall, with a big sign on the top of it pointing to the..the rip cord ring saying ‘This cord..this ring.. is but suggested when you are up there.’ Now, is our life any less important than the person who's skydiving and has a ring that they can..It's only suggested that they pull it. Right? For this alcoholic the Steps are required, according to my own experience and the experience of the authors in this book.

Going to..the next one ‘Going to meetings and not drinking is vital to our recovery.’

**\*indistinct murmuring from audience\***

What do you think? ‘Going to meetings and not drinking is vital to our recovery.’ Let's see what it says in Roman numeral XVII. *Roman numeral XVII.* *‘It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.’*

**\*Indistinct chatter\***

That's at the top of Roman numeral seventeen, which is XVII, where the authors state… *‘It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.’*

**\*indistinct query from audience member\***

In the fourth edition that would be two later pages. The last one, ‘Our common suffering is what holds us together.’ True or false? What do you think? Let's see what the authors say.

**\*indistinct murmuring from audience\***

It says, ‘Our common suffering is what holds us together.’ Let's see what it says in the book on page 17. *‘The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined. The tremendous fact for every one of us that we have discovered a common solution.’*  In other words our suffering is not what binds us together. Our suffering is what brings us together, what holds us together is the solution.

Every single person in this room who has completed The 12 Steps, regardless of how long you've been sober, you are *now* in a position to take somebody else through the Steps. If you're anything like me, when my sponsor first took me through the steps, he cut me loose and said “Ok, now go out there and find somebody to work with.” “What do you mean find somebody to work with?” I was afraid I was going to *kill* somebody. But you see, I had experience, I had gone through the Steps, I would go to meetings and I got a lot of flack from people telling me, “You haven't been sober long enough” where does it say in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous that I have to be sober X amount of time in order to carry a message of hope? Doesn't say that in the book. Once again, if it's not in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous it is *not* Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm here to tell each and every one of you that have completed the Steps *you are the ones*. *You* are the torchbearers of this programme. You are the lifeblood, the old timer is the heart, neither one can survive without the other. We're depending on you to carry the message of hope to the new person. To carry the message of hope back to your meetings. To get active with sponsoring people, so I'm encouraging every single person in this room to come back next week for a new cycle of The Big Book workshop, you are in a position, you are qualified to do so, you have had a spiritual experience. Has the compulsion to drink been removed for you? You're nodding yes. That means you are in a position to do so. You can't do this wrong. There is no sponsor school, do you know how you learn to be a sponsor? By *being one!*  There is no sponsor school you don't.. “Well, I need to wait until I'm sober a year.” *Really*? Now, *what if* Doctor Bob and Bill Wilson did that? What if Bill Wilson carried the message to Doctor Bob and Doctor Bob said, “How long you been sober?” He didn't *care*, he had a message of *hope*.

God made a deal with me. He separated me from alcohol, as a result of going through the Steps, and this was the deal, “Paul, I guarantee you will never, ever have to drink again and you'll never have to live the way you were living before, and all I ask is that you carry this message of hope to another alcoholic.” That's a smoking deal. For an alcoholic like me, that's what..this is, I'm telling you this is the best game in town right here. Nobody in this room has to *ever* drink again, and you don't *ever* have to live the way you were living before, if you don't want to.

I want to thank each and every one of you and I want to thank you for allowing me to be of service, and I'm looking forward to seeing each and every one of you next Sunday for a new cycle of The Big Book workshop so that you can come here and be of service, to the new person, who wants to be taken through the Steps as outlined in this book, so they too can have freedom. God bless you and thank you very much.

**\*Applause\***