

WESTBORO BIG BOOK STUDY GROUP

All Saints Anglican Church

Saturday Morning 9:00 a.m.

347 Richmond Road (near Churchill)

Session03a.doc

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Preface

(Tape 1 - 00:50.57.3)

J & C Table of Contents. Okay, let's go over for just a few moments to the Preface, Roman numeral xi. And the second paragraph on Roman numeral xi,

Big Book p. xi, par. 2 "Because this book has become the basic text for our Society and has helped such large numbers of alcoholic men and women to recovery, there exist a sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. Therefore, the first portion of this volume, describing the A.A. recovery program, has been left untouched in the course of revisions made for both the second and the third editions."

J & C And I think there's two ideas there. First when we see the words "basic text." I think we're alerted to the type book we have in front of us. All kinds of books in the world today. You got novels, novels written on fact, novels written on fiction. Biographies, autobiographies, concordances, many kind of books. But we also have a book called a textbook, and many of us don't have very fond memories of textbooks. Every time I saw the word textbook all I could think about was cheat, I don't know why. Remember about how back in school when we used a text book, we had to read and study and do things you didn't want to do, take tests and all that kind of jazz. Lots of work involved in it. And for some people in A.A. today the very idea of a textbook just completely turns them off.

But if you would take a textbook in it's simplest form--really all it is, is a means of taking information from the mind of one human or a group of human beings, put it down in the written word then transfer that information to the mind of another human being who's using the text book. And that's all teaching is. A lot of people today say you can't teach in A.A., I don't see why you can't. Teaching is nothing more than transferring information from the mind of one person to the mind of another, increasing the knowledge of the one who's being taught. We all teach everyday and we're all being taught everyday. I don't see how in the world we could ever sponsor and help anybody if we couldn't teach them what we already know. And that's what a textbook does too. A textbook usually assumes that the reader of the book will have very little knowledge of the subject matter. It normally starts at a very simple level. Then as the knowledge of the reader increases, the material presented becomes more difficult.

The idea of a textbook on mathematics. Let's say my friend Joe here knows nothing at all about mathematics. He can't add, he can't subtract, he can't do any of those things. Oh, he can count. In fact he can probably count to twenty-one if he's standing there naked and got everything where it belongs, he might make 21. Twenty and a half actually. If I handed him a textbook on mathematics and I said, Joe, I want you to go to Chapter Five and work the algebra problems. Now being a good fellow he would go to Chapter Five and look at them but he can't even add and subtract, they just look like marks on paper to him. But if I said, Joe, Chapter 1 in this textbook on mathematics deals with the value of numbers and addition and subtraction. If you'll read it and study it, and let me help you, by the time you're through with Chapter One you'll know how to add and subtract and sure enough he learns how to do that. And then I say now let's go to Chapter Two. Based on what you've learned in One, you can go to Chapter Two and learn how to multiply and divide and sure enough he does that. And then I say, now you can go to Chapter Three and you can learn fractions and decimals and we gradually prepare his mind for the new information in Chapter Five. I think

the greatest mistake being made in A.A. today,
the newcomer comes to the door
we hand him the book
and we say go to Chapter Five and do what it says and you'll be okay

And they go to Chapter Five and they run into a series of algebra problems.

Step One says, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol -- that our lives had become unmanageable."

The newcomer says, man I'm not powerless over anything.

They have no idea what we mean by that statement (because we've directed them to Chapter 5 (Step 3).

Step Two says, "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity".

The newcomer says, don't tell me I'm crazy. Yeah, I do stupid things when I'm drunk, but when I'm sober I'm like other people.

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They have no idea what we mean by that statement.(because we've directed them to Chapter 5 (Step 3).

But if you're not powerless and you're not nuts, then you don't need (Chapter 5) Step Three to be thinking about turning your will and your life over to the care of something you don't understand in the first place. We present them with an impossible situation.

If we can do nothing else this weekend, I hope we're going to be able to get over (realize) the idea of the value of

The Doctor's Opinion and the first four chapters.

There is where we learn what the problem is.

There is where we learn what the solution is.

That prepares us for Chapter 5. You see Chapter 5 starts with Step 3.

It's very difficult to start with (Step) 3, unless you've got (Step) 1 and (Step) 2 behind you.

Hopefully we'll be able to see that. I think the other thing that is so important,

Big Book p. xi, par. 2 "...there exists a sentiment against any radical changes being made in it."

J & C The first edition of the Big Book, "Alcoholics Anonymous", and by the way this happens to be a 2nd printing of it. You'll notice how big this 2nd printing is. The actual lettering size is the same as your book today, but you'll also notice it that it had very wide margins on the pages. The alcoholic mind says the bigger the book, the better it'll sell. And that's why they call it a Big Book. They printed it on the thickest, cheapest old paper they could find. Cheap paper is thick, it's real thick, and you'll notice how thick this book actually is. It doesn't say a bit more than the book does today, but you know actually the thicker it is, certainly the more money it's worth. I think I can see their ideas behind some of this. What really amazes me is you notice the color on the dust jacket. I can just see some alcoholic in New York City walking down the street with this under his arm trying to remain anonymous. The brighter the color the quicker it catches the eye, and the better it.... I can see Bill Wilson all through this book, real _____.

The first printing came out in 1939. By 1955 the fellowship had changed. The stories in the back of the book were there for the newcomer to be able to identify with. In '55, since bottom had come up, age had come down, more and more women coming in, they said we need to change those stories in the back of the book. So in 1955 they deleted some stories, added some more, came out with a second edition, but the recovery section remained the same. 1976 they did the same thing. Deleted some stories in the back of the book, added some more, came out with a third edition, but the recovery section remained the same.

Now, I think what's so important for me today is whether I'm reading a first, second, or third edition--we have never changed the recovery section. I wonder why we've never found it necessary to change it. Because it works, doesn't it, yeah you betcha. And why does it work? Three reasons I think.

1. Alcoholics haven't changed a bit. They still get drunk, they get in jailhouses, they get in divorce courts, they get in knife fights, they get in gun battles, they get in car wrecks, they get in penitentiaries, they get in cemeteries. They're still doing the same dumb things today that they did back in 1939. Haven't changed a lick.
2. Alcohol hasn't changed. The names have changed. The bottles have changed. The colors have changed. But alcohol is the same thing today it was in 1939.
3. Human nature never changes. It's the same today as it was in 2000 years ago. And that's what this book deals with. It deals with alcoholics, alcoholism and human nature. Therefore, we've never found it necessary to change it. I think that's probably one of the greatest miracles of Alcoholics Anonymous. You know how we love to change things. Everybody that's ever read it's certainly has re-written it at least twice in their minds. Collectively though, we've never found it necessary. Joe?

(Tape 1 - 00:59:29.3)

9 minutes