

WESTBORO BIG BOOK STUDY TAPE GROUP

All Saints Anglican Church

Saturday Morning 9:00 a.m.

347 Richmond Road (near Churchill)

Session 13.doc

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More About Alcoholism

(Tape 3 - 00:54:40.0)

J & C I see Bill running this all through his mind. And he probably says to himself, "They're not going to like this idea of a spiritual experience any more than I did." You remember he had an aversion to these things. He and Ebby argued about this for a long time. And I think Bill says "**I need to tell them just exactly what's going to happen to them if they don't have this spiritual experience.**" And he writes another chapter and he called it More About Alcoholism. And in this chapter he talks about one thing and one thing only. He talks about **the insanity of alcoholism.**

You know, **Step 2 says "We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."** Well if we've got to be restored to sanity, that indicates we must be insane. And many alcoholics are highly offended when you bring this up. They say "Oh don't tell me I'm insane. Yah I do some pretty crazy stupid things when drinking but when I'm sober I'm much like normal people." Other alcoholics say "Well I don't have any trouble with this insanity because I remember the crazy stupid things I did while drinking." In either case they are referring to **the stupid things we do while drunk. No, that's not insanity.** The stupid things we do while drunk, that's caused by a mind that is filled with alcohol which lowers the inhibitions. And if your mind is filled with something that lowers your inhibitions, look out, you're going to do some pretty crazy stupid things all right. That's why they give all that free booze downstairs (casino). That's not insanity, that's caused by alcohol itself. In order for us to understand this we finally had to go back to the dictionary again and to look up the word sanity or the word sane. And it's defined in the dictionary as

Sanity - wholeness of mind or completeness of mind

If your mind is whole, if your mind is complete, that means you can see the truth about everything around you. You'll normally make decisions then based on truth and life turns out to be pretty good.

An insane mind is one that is less than whole. A mind that is less than whole cannot always see the truth about everything around it. Sometimes it makes a decision based upon a lie and then life becomes pretty lousy.

To be insane does not mean you're crazy. If you're crazy that means you've lost more than half your marbles. And you've got to be locked up somewhere to protect you and society from you. That's craziness. But insanity is just less than whole. I think one of the best ways I know to illustrate it is to just...let's take a pie and set it here in front of us. Let's cut that pie into ten pieces. You come along and I give you a piece of pie. My pie is now less than whole but hell I've still got 90% of it. Somebody else comes along and I give them a piece of pie. My pie is now more less than whole but I've still got 80% of it.

Insanity does not mean you're all gone. It just means your not quite all here.

And when it comes to alcohol from time to time it seems as though we're not quite all here, **cause we can't always see the truth about alcohol.**

**We make a decision based upon a lie,
then we run into the truth and
life becomes an absolute living hell.**

So let's look within the mind of we alcoholics just before we take the first drink. Stone cold sober. **Can we or can we not see the truth. If we can see the truth, we're sane. If we can't, we're insane.**

Now Bill is going to show us this by a series of examples. He's going to give us the man of 30. He's going to look at Jim. He's going to look at the jaywalker. And he's going to look at Fred. And each time we're going to look into the mind to see if we can or cannot see the truth about alcohol. Let's look at it just a few minutes.

This chapter is called More About Alcoholism. It could be called More Truth About Alcoholism. I've heard all my life, **if you know the truth, the truth will set you free. And if you're not free it's because you don't know the truth. And this chapter here should give me more truth so I can base my life upon truth rather than upon things that are not true.**

Big Book p. 30, par 1 "Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think he is bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it is not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain

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attempts to prove we could drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."

J & C Now be careful. In these two paragraphs that Joe just read, he has used four different words that all mean the same thing. And if you catch him at it, you know what he's doing. If you don't you'll think that he's talking about something else. He said, "The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker." Now we know

an obsession is an idea that is so strong it can make you believe something that's not true. It can make you believe a lie.

The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. We know what an illusionist is. An illusionist is a magician. And they can stand in front of you and with slight of hand and a few props they can make you believe something that is not true. So

an illusion also means to believe something that is not true or to believe a lie.

Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. Insanity is to believe something that is not true. In the next paragraph he said, "The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed." Delusion means the same thing.

If you've deluded yourself, it means you've come to believe something that is not true.

So you may see him using any one of four terms.

- **Obsession**
- **Illusion**
- **Delusion**
- **Insanity**

All four mean exactly the same thing. **To believe something that is not true, or to believe a lie.**

Let's go over to page 32, second paragraph. Let's look at the lie the man of 30 believed.

Big Book p. 32, par 2 "A man of thirty was doing a great deal of spree drinking. He was very nervous in the morning after these bouts and quieted himself with more liquor. He was ambitious to succeed in business, but saw that he would get nowhere if he drank at all. Once he started, he had no control whatever. He made up his mind that until he had been successful in business and had retired, he would not touch another drop. An exceptional man, he remained bone dry for twenty-five years and retired at the age of fifty-five, after a successful and happy business career. Then he fell victim to a belief which practically every alcoholic has that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a bottle. In two months he was in a hospital, puzzled and humiliated. He tried to regulate his drinking for a little while, making several trips to the hospital meantime. Then, gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found he could not. Every means of solving his problem which money could buy was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man at retirement, he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years.

This case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remained sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. But here is a man who at fifty-five years found he was just where he had left off at thirty. We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic." Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol."

J & C Now we know the truth to be this. "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic."

We've never seen one single case where one of us was able to go back to successful drinking. Now to believe anything different than that is to believe something that is not true, or to believe a lie.

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This guy believed that after 25 years of sobriety he could now drink like normal people. Now based upon that belief he took a drink, triggered the allergy, couldn't stop...four years later he's dead. Now is his real problem though the fact that he has a psychical allergy to alcohol or a form of insanity that tells him it's OK to drink alcohol after 25 years of sobriety?

The real problem centers in our mind telling us we can drink rather than in our body that ensures that we can't drink.

Big Book p. 34, par 2 "For those who are unable to drink moderately the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop. Whether such a person can quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not. Many of us felt that we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism, as we know it this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish.

How then shall we help our readers determine, to their own satisfaction, whether they are one of us? The experiment of quitting for a period of time will be helpful, but we think we can render an even greater service to alcoholic sufferers and perhaps to the medical fraternity. So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking, for obviously this is the crux of the problem.

What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? Friends who have reasoned with him after a spree which has brought him to the point of divorce or bankruptcy are mystified when he walks directly into a saloon. Why does he? Of what is he thinking? Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim."

J & C Now we're going to look in old Jim's mind just before he gets drunk. And we're going to see whether he is sane or insane. Joe loves Jim. Yah I loves old Jim. I identify with Jim.

Big Book p. 35, par 2 "Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. This man has a charming wife and family. He inherited a lucrative automobile agency. He had a commendable World War record. He is a good salesman. Everybody likes him.

J & C Typical alcoholic isn't he?

Big Book p. 35, par 2 cont. "He is an intelligent man, normal so far as we can see, except for a nervous disposition. He did no drinking until he was thirty-five. In a few years he became so violent when intoxicated that he had to be committed. On leaving the (treatment..) asylum he came into contact with us. We told him what we knew of alcoholism ..."

J & C They told him about **Step 1. The physical allergy, the obsession of the mind, the powerless condition.**

Big Book p. 35, par 3 cont. "... and the answer we had found."

J & C They told him about **Step 2. The power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**

Big Book p. 35, par 3 cont. "He made a beginning."

J & C Step...a little later on the book says, **Step 3 is just a beginning.** So apparently Jim took steps 1,2 and 3 and immediately things started to get better for him.

Big Book p. 35, par 3 cont. "His family was re- assembled, and he began to work as a salesman for the business he had lost through drinking. All went well for a time, but * **he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.** " *

J & C The book is going to tell us that **the only way we enlarge on Step 3 is 4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11 and 12** and Jim didn't do any of those. 1,2 and 3. (the A.A. waltz)

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Big Book p. 35, par 3 cont. *“To his consternation, he found himself drunk half a dozen times in rapid succession. On each of these occasions we worked with him, reviewing carefully what had happened.”*

J & C Ah these were good AA members. Jim got drunk six times in a row. Each time they went over there and worked with him, carefully reviewing what had happened. *You get drunk six times in a row today and they probably won't have anything to do with you.* These were good solid AA members. “

Big Book p. 35, par 3 cont. *“He agreed he was a real alcoholic and in a serious condition. Now he knew he faced another trip to the asylum if he kept on. Moreover, he would lose his family for whom he had a deep affection. Yet he got drunk again. We asked him to tell us exactly how it happened.”*

J & C They're getting a little tired of Jim now. They said, my God Jim this is seven times in a row. Let's don't go through this any more. You sit down here and you tell us exactly how this has happened. On page 36 we're going to see where Jim was sane and then we are going to see where he went insane.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“This is his story: “I came to work on Tuesday morning.”*

J & C We read this book for years before we saw this. “I came to work on Tuesday morning.” Where was he all day Monday? We alcoholics are bad about Mondays.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for a concern I once owned.”*

J & C Now I don't think that's insanity, that's probably normal thinking. I think any of us that had to be a salesman for a concern we once owned, we'd probably be a little irritated by that fact too. That's normal sane thinking.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious.”*

J & C The boss probably said “Say Jim, by the way, where were you all day yesterday anyhow?” Nothing serious, just enough to irritate him. A little restless, a little irritable a little discontented.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“Then I decided to drive to the country and see one of my prospects for a car.”*

J & C What's more normal than if you're a car salesman, you want to get away from the shop for a while, drive out in the country, see somebody that we already know that we're trying to sell a car to. That would be normal sane thinking for an alcoholic car salesman.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“On the way I felt hungry so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking. I just thought I would get a sandwich.”*

J & C What's more normal than if you're hungry, to stop in a roadside place to get a sandwich. The fact that they've got a bar there is beside the point. We have no intention of drinking. We're hungry, we're going to get a sandwich. Normal sane thinking for an alcoholic car salesman.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“I also had the notion that I might find a customer for a car at this place, which was familiar for I had been going to it for years. I had eaten there many times during the months I was sober.”*

J & C We're not going in there to drink. We've eaten there many times during the months we were sober. We're going to go in there, get a sandwich and maybe sell a car while we're in there. Normal sane thinking for an alcoholic car salesman.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. *“I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still no thought of drinking.”*

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J & C What's more normal than to sit down at a table, order a sandwich and a glass of milk? Normal sane thinking for an alcoholic car salesman.

Big Book p. 36, par 1 cont. I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of milk.

J & C Now if you're hungry enough there's nothing wrong with two sandwiches and two glasses of milk. Unless you're a member of Overeaters Anonymous, you'd better look at it. But that would be normal sane thinking for an alcoholic car salesman. Two sandwiches, two glasses of milk. Now comes the squiggly writing. That's italic.

Big Book p. 36, par 2 "Suddenly ,..."

J & C Suddenly, that means right now

Big Book p. 36, par 2 "Suddenly the thought crossed my mind that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach."

J & C Now this is absolute insanity isn't it. For this guy to believe that he can take whisky, mix it with milk and take it on a full stomach and it won't hurt him. Now based on the insane idea, he makes a decision and takes some action.

Big Book p. 36, par 2 cont. "I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart, but I felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach".

J & C Now we've got it inside of ourselves. The physical allergy takes over. Now then we can't stop.

Big Book p. 36, par 2 cont. "The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me so I tried another."

J & C Can you imagine how he's going to feel with whiskey and milk back and forth? What a hangover he's going to have.

Big Book p. 36, par 3 "Thus started one more journey to the asylum for Jim. Here was the threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused him. He had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk! Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight, be called anything else?"

J & C And if you were looking for a definition of insanity that would be it right there. **The lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight to be called anything else?**

Now is Jim's real problem the fact that he has physical allergy to alcohol? Or that he has a form of insanity that tells him it's OK to drink alcohol mixed with milk on a full stomach?

The real problem centers in the mind telling us we can drink rather than the body that ensures that we can't.

(Tape 3 - 01:12:21.0)

18 minutes