

WESTBORO BIG BOOK STUDY TAPE GROUP

All Saints Anglican Church

Saturday Morning 9:00 a.m.

347 Richmond Road (near Churchill)

Session 17.doc

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Step 3 - How It Works

(Tape 4 - 00:34:13.0)

J & C Now then am I ready to make a decision? You betcha. When he was the God of justice, when he was hellfire and brimstone, I wasn't ready to make that decision. But throughout this chapter my concept of God has changed entirely and I'm beginning to believe he just might be a kind and loving God. And just maybe he'll start doing some good things for me, not hellfire and brimstone, and now I'm ready to make a decision. And I don't think it's by accident that the very next chapter is entitled How It Works.

You know back on page 45 it said the main object of this book was to enable me to find a power greater than myself which would solve my problem. And Bill's going to sit down here now and he's going to right some of the best spiritual information the worlds every seen a little formula, or proposals he called them, the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. And I can just see Bill with the problem that he has. You know we've got Protestants in AA and we've got Catholics in AA, we've got Jewish people in AA, we got a sprinkling of Muslims in AA, we got some Buddhists come into AA at that time and how are you going to write a set of steps or proposals that's not going to offend these people, quite a chore for a guy like Bill or anybody, to tell you the truth. The Oxford Groups were coming from 1st Century Christianity, they had those 4 absolutes and they were really, really strong. They wouldn't give you any slack at all. They were more interested in the letter of the law rather than the spirit of the law. Bill was interested in the spirit of these things rather than in the letter of them, that's why it's a spiritual program. So Bill had one gigantic problem here try to write these steps in order to in such a manner they wouldn't offend anybody. And he accomplished that through the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

These 4 absolutes that the Oxford Group had said you were to practice absolute love, absolute purity, absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness. And these alcoholics were having a hell of a time being absolute anything except drunks you know. And they said Bill we need to get rid of that kind of stuff. Also they had made their own little steps, six of them which came from the Oxford Group tenets. And Bill could see loopholes in these steps that the alcoholic mind was slipping through and he knew they were going to have to have more strength, and he knew they were going to have to be expanded, but he didn't know how far. And in trying to satisfy that bunch, in trying to satisfy the people from all different religions, and trying to satisfy those that didn't want God in here, Bill had a terrible time with it. By that time AA had really divided into you might say three factions.

In Akron where Dr. Bob was they didn't have any problem with God. Dr. Bob was a highly religious man, he used the bible and he insisted that everybody he worked with use it too. God was no problem there.

But the New York City people were an entirely different breed of cat. They really didn't want anything to do with God if they could avoid it. They would have preferred a book dealing with the mind rather than spirituality period. There was finally a third faction that said, let's talk about God, but let's not talk about him too much, let's come down somewhere in the middle of this thing. So Bill's trying to satisfy them all, and he said he tried, and he tried, and he tried and he tried to get started on Chapter 5. This is going to be the **directions** on how to recover. And he said I simply could not do it. He said one night while in bed leaning with a pillow behind his back leaning against the headboard, pad and pencil in hand trying to start Chapter 5 he said I finally just gave up. He said I put down the pad and the pencil and said I prayed and asked God for help and direction and said I meditated for maybe 10 or 15 minutes and he said after a while I reached over and picked up the pad and the pencil and he said it felt as if the pencil had a mind of its own as it raced across the pages. In less than 30 minutes he had written How It Works. One of the greatest pieces of spiritual information the world has ever seen. After he had written it he went back and numbered these proposals and he found out there was 12. He didn't set out to write 12. He went back and numbered them and there was 12 of them there. Now almost immediately after having done that somebody knocked on the door. One of the guys in the New York City group had one of his sponsees with him, they knew that Bill stayed up late working on the book anyhow so they had come by to see Bill on the way home. Bill could hardly wait to show this to this old older member. Look, look, look, at the new 12 steps, and the older member said what in the hell is this. He said we only had Ten Commandments and now you got twelve. Six has been sufficient until everything up till now. And he said, I don't like it at all, and the fight was on. And they fought and they fought and Lois finally came in and gave them a cup of coffee and settled them down. Then Bill presented this How It Works to the other members and that's when the crap really hit the fan. Cause they began to say to Bill, this sounds too much like the Oxford Group absolutes. You're going to have to get some of that stuff out of there. And they said, Bill you're trying to give directions to people and you don't have the right to tell anybody what they have to do. And Bill this, and Bill that, and Bill this and Bill that. And they almost destroyed, not only the book project, but the little fellowship in its entirety. Now Joe is going to read How It Works from the original manuscript which most of you have probably heard before, and if he reads

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through there I think you'll be able to see the differences between what Bill wrote that night and what the fellowship forced him to change in order to have what we have today. Let's go through it for just a moment and see the differences.

Can you imagine what kind of fight you would have if you left here today went back to your group and you had 12 steps when you left but now you had 24? They're be a little fightin' going on wouldn't it? That's what Bill was up to. And here's how it works

Chapter 5 - Original Manuscript

"Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our **DIRECTIONS** (path). Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a **WAY OF LIFE** (manner of living), which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it--then you are ready to **FOLLOW DIRECTIONS** (take certain steps). At some of these **YOU MAY BALK** (we balked). **YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN** (we thought we could) find an easier, softer way. But **WE DOUBT IF YOU CAN** (we could not). With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that **YOU ARE DEALING** (we deal) with alcohol--cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for **YOU** (us). But there is One who has all power--that One is God. **YOU MUST** (may you) find Him now.

Half measures **WILL AVAIL YOU** (availed us) nothing. **YOU STAND** (we stood) at the turning point. **THROW YOURSELF UNDER** (We asked) his protection and care with complete abandon. **NOW WE THINK YOU CAN TAKE IT.**

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as **YOUR** (a) program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care **AND DIRECTION** of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely **WILLING THAT** (ready to have) God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly **ON OUR KNEES** asked Him to remove our shortcomings- **HOLDING NOTHING BACK.**
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make **COMPLETE** amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
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.
12. Having had a spiritual **EXPERIENCE** (awakening) as the result of this **COURSE OF ACTION** (these steps), we tried to carry this message to **OTHERS, ESPECIALLY** alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

NOW YOU MAY EXCLAIM (many of us exclaimed) "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholicthat's The Doctor's Opinion, Bill's Story, Ch. 2,3
the chapter to the agnosticChapter Four.

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and our personal adventures before and afterBill's Story, and those in the back of the book.

HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO SELL YOU (make clear) three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That **YOU ARE** (we were) alcoholic and **CAN NOT** (could not) manage **YOUR** (our) own **LIFE** (lives) Step One.
- (b) That probably no human power **CAN RELIEVE YOUR** (could have relieved our) alcoholism. Step Two.
- (c) That God **CAN AND WILL** (could and would if He were sought)..... The rest of Step Two.

IF YOU ARE NOT CONVINCED ON THESE VITAL ISSUES, YOU OUGHT TO RE-READ THE BOOK TO THIS POINT, OR ELSE THROW IT AWAY.

You could see that Bill, his intention was not suggestions, he was going to give us **real directions on how to work the steps and when to work the steps**. And he's going to give us **precise, specific, clear-cut directions** on how to do that and he was very adamant about that. But the crap hit the fan and they asked him and they made it through the argument to make some changes in this original "How It Works" and so today's How It Works that we have in the book and the changes that were forced upon Bill. And Bill said he would compromise with them in this area, but he made a deal with them and I can imagine through all the arguments that they had up to this point back and forth in this program the kind of arguments that they had and they were almost ready to disband and run the little fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at that time. So Bill made a little compromise. He said I will make these changes but from now on I will complete the rest of this book or else you can do. Well they didn't want to complete the rest of the book; they wanted Bill to continue to do that, so they agreed to continue to let Bill write the rest of the book without much interference on their part

I can just see old Bill when he wrote this and gave it to them and they begin to fight and argue over it and they begin to tell him he's going to have to change it. Remember Bill's stubborn and bullheaded just like the rest of us. And he said no, I'm not going to change this and they said, well Bill you are, don't you remember it's not your book it's our book. That's the deal we made to begin with. He said that doesn't make any difference, I'm not going to change this part of the book. And they said, well you are going to change it. And he said what you guys don't realize is **these aren't my words anyhow, these are Gods words. They came after prayer and meditation**. And they said, we don't give a damn whose words they are, it's our book, and you're going to change it.

And finally, finally Bill realized that if he didn't compromise, they would destroy this project and maybe the whole fellowship. And there was a non-alcoholic psychologist around in those days and he made some suggestions. He said, why don't you change it from directions to suggestions, you'll still get your meaning across and probably more people would accept it. And he said, where you're saying you, you, you, he said don't do that; don't tell them what they have to do, change that to we. Say this is what we had to do. You'll get your message across and more people will probably accept it. And he said, where you're saying must, must, change that to ought, ought and it will be more acceptable. Now Bill very, very reluctantly made those changes. Now today we don't know if they hadn't made the changes, if they'd left it like it was originally maybe instead of two million world wide (1988), we'd have 10 million. But also if they hadn't made the changes instead of 2 million world wide we might only have ten thousand. Who knows? Nobody knows, we just know this is the history behind this particular part of the book.

Bill was cunning, baffling and powerful also. Cause he said okay, I'm going to compromise with you, but you're going to have to compromise with me. And they said what do you want? He says, I'm tired. I've fought with you all I'm going to fight. He said, If you want me to finish the book, give me the authority to do so. If you don't want to give me the authority, then you finish the book. Well they didn't want to give him that authority, but they didn't want to finish the book either. So they very reluctantly agreed to that.

What Bill knew that they didn't know, is two pages later he's going to put **DIRECTIONS**, and **YOU**, and **MUST** right back in the book. He's had it in the book all the way up to How It Works, they jerked it out, then he puts it back, and that ruins some of the continuity of the book. But know that we see what happened it makes more sense.

The other thing that is so apparent is when he says back here about the three pertinent ideas

"Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after have been designed to sell you (make clear) three pertinent ideas."

He's talking about the Doctor's Opinion and the first four chapters and the stories in the back of the book

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Now if we've been sold on those three pertinent ideas

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives."
Then we're through with Step 1

If we've come to believe that no human power could relieve our alcoholism and that God can and will.
Then we're through with Step 2

Now the very next statement says if you are convinced then you are now at Step 3.

You see the fallacy of trying to start somebody in Chapter 5 is that it starts at Step 3. And it's hard to start with Step 3 unless you've got 1 and 2 behind you.

People come to us today and they say, well how do you work **Steps 1 & 2**

You don't, they are not working steps. There is **no action involved** here. **These are conclusions of the mind** that we draw based upon information presented to us in the Doctors Opinion and the first four chapters.

I've always been powerless over alcohol and my life has been unmanageable because of that. I just did not know that, nor did I know why until I read the Doctor's Opinion and the first four chapters.

There's always been a power greater than I am could restore me to sanity, I just did not believe that he would nor did I understand the insanity until I read the Doctor's Opinion and the first four chapters.

Now if I can say to myself today, you betcha, I'm powerless over alcohol, my life is unmanageable I'm through with Step 1

If I can say to myself today, I have come to believe there's a power greater than I am can restore me to sanity I'm through with Step 2

Now then I'm ready to look at Step 3. Now I might make a decision.

(Tape 4 - 00:51:49.6)

17 minutes