

WESTBORO BIG BOOK STUDY GROUP

All Saints Anglican Church

Saturday Morning 9:00 a.m.

347 Richmond Road (near Churchill)

Session04b.doc

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The Dr.'s Opinion

(Tape 1 - 01:24:37.0)

J & C Now, if the purpose of a textbook is to transfer information from the mind of one human being through the written word to the mind of another human being, then it stands to reason that the transference of that information is going to be based upon the understanding of the words that are used. If the writer of the book uses a certain word and understands it this way (<), the reader of the book reads that word and understands it this way (>), a different understanding then the information that comes through is going to be garbled and incomplete information. And there seems to be a few key words in the Big Book, that many of us have had difficulty with, and I think the first word we've had a real problem with is this word,

Allergy

Well most of us when we come here we assume already we know what an allergy is, I know I did.

I knew if you were allergic to something and you got around it or you ate it or you drank it or something like that, that there would be some physical manifestation or indicator of that allergy.

For instance if you eat strawberries and you're allergic to them you'll break out in a rash, the rash being the manifestation of that allergy.

you don't see our allergy you feel it, and only we alcoholics feel it.

If you're allergic to milk and you drink it you'll have a bad case of dysentery, the dysentery being the manifestation of that allergy.

If you're allergic to certain plants such as ragweeds, and you get around them, your eyes, nose, itch, water, and you start sneezing.

The itchy, watering eyes, nose and the sneezing, that's the manifestation of that allergy.

So I knew if you were allergic to something there would be something there that you could see.

So they came to me and they said Charlie, you got an allergy to alcohol and you'll never be able to safely drink it again.

And I said how in the hell can I be allergic to alcohol; I'm drinking a quart a day.

How can you possibly drink that much of something you're allergic to?

And I said besides that when I drink alcohol I don't break out in a rash, and I don't have a bad case of dysentery.

Once in a while I might depending on what I had been drinking, but usually I didn't. Nor did it make my eyes, nose, itch, water, and cause me to sneeze. And I said I don't understand what you're talking about, you need to explain that to me.

And they said well you don't need to understand; they said all you gotta know is you can't drink it.

Well today I think I know why they told me that, I don't think they understood it a bit better than I did.

And I went from person to person to person to person, trying to get somebody to explain this allergy to me, and all they would say is what difference does it make, forget the damned allergy, don't drink and you'll be all right, keep coming to meetings.

Now if you're an alcoholic like I am with a keen, intellectual, alcoholic mind and you got a question like that dangling out here in front of you, if you don't get the answer to it, sooner or later it's going to drive you out of your mind. And one day in sheer desperation I went to a source of information that has never failed me since that time. I went to the dictionary and I looked up the word allergy and I found several different definitions of it (the way you do with any word depending on how you use it). But I think I found the one that fit me exactly when it said,

An allergy is an 'abnormal' reaction to any food, beverage, or substance of any kind.

An abnormal reaction. So I began to look back over my drinking history to see where I was abnormal, and to my amazement I found out, I don't know what's normal and what's abnormal.

The only difference between normal and abnormal is how the majority of people react to substances of any kind.

The only thing I knew about drinking was the way I drank and the way those people drank who drank with me. If they didn't drink like I did, we didn't drink together.

So to find out what's normal to see if I'm abnormal, I have to go to the normal, social, temperate moderate drinker; those that drink alcohol and do not get in trouble with it. And I asked them to describe to me how they feel when they take a drink. And they said we come home from work, tired, tense, wrought up from the day's work, we can have a couple of drinks before dinner.

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We begin to get a relaxing, comfortable feeling. We'll go ahead and have dinner, and we probably won't drink any more that night. Well, I don't feel that way when I drink alcohol. Whenever I take a drink of alcohol it passes over my lips, my lips begin to tingle immediately. Hits my teeth and they kind of chatter up and down. Strikes my tongue, and I can feel it begin to grow, and expand and swell. Hits my cheeks and they kind of flutter in and out. At the same time it's passing through my sinus cavities up into my forehead and I begin to get a feeling up here in my forehead, which is absolutely, indescribably, wonderful. Now, I didn't swallow the damn stuff yet, I just got it in my mouth. When I swallow that alcohol and it starts down through my esophagus, great things begin to take place. The first thing that happens is my chest begins to grow and expand, and gets bigger and bigger. Hits my stomach and just literally explodes like a bomb. Immediately I feel it racing through my arms, and they get longer and longer; hits my hands and fingers and they begin to tingle and vibrate. The same time it's racing through my arms it's racing through my legs, their getting longer and longer, I'm getting taller and taller and it hits my feet and toes and they get a hot, intense burning, exciting get up and go somewhere and do something feeling. I don't understand a comfortable, relaxing feeling when you have a drink. These people told me something that blew my mind for me. They said Charlie, whenever we have a couple of drinks we begin to experience a feeling of dizziness, a feeling of being out of control, and they said we don't like that feeling. Therefore, one or two drinks is all we want to drink. How many times have you and I tried to get them to drink more and they said oh, no, no, I feel this already, or oh, no, no, no, this is making me dizzy, I don't want anymore. So today I realize that's the normal reaction to alcohol. You see for most people when they put alcohol in the system it hits the stomach, it immediately goes into the bloodstream, immediately goes to the brain. And for a normal drinker it acts as a downer, it's a sedative.

It's supposed to give them a slightly tipsy out of control feeling. Now when it goes into my stomach, into my bloodstream, into my brain, instead of me getting a slightly tipsy out of control feeling,
alcohol for me (the alcoholic) acts as an upper, its a stimulant,

and my brain gets a very exciting, in control feeling. They have two drinks and they want to go to bed. I have two drinks and by God I want to go to town, immediately. I react to it differently mentally.

And another thing they told me is that when we have a couple of drinks not only do we get a slightly tipsy out of control feeling, they said we begin to experience a feeling of nausea, they said we don't like that feeling and therefore one or two drinks is all we want to take. How many times have you tried to get them to drink more and they say oh, no, no, this is making me sick, I don't want anymore of it. That's the normal reaction to alcohol.

Alcohol is a toxic substance; a destroyer of human tissue
When you put it in your body, your mind and body is supposed to react to it with nausea
and say puke it up and get it out of here.
When I put it in my body, instead of my body experiencing the feeling of nausea,
my body experiences an actual physical craving which demands more of the same.
Their body said puke it up, mine said put some more in here.
So not only do I react to it differently mentally, but I also react to it differently physically.

Now the only difference between normal and abnormal is what the majority of people do. If the majority, nine out of ten, react that way, one out of ten reacts the way I do, then

my reaction is considered to be abnormal,
therefore I'm considered to be allergic to alcohol.
You can't see it, you can only feel it, and only alcoholics feel it.

You see I kept looking for the rash; I kept looking for the dysentery. No you don't see our allergy, you feel it and only we alcoholics feel it. Joe.

(01:33.21) End of Tape 1
(9 minutes)