

AA History

Joe McQ. & Charlie P. · session 1 of 9

Introductions and the spirit of the seminar

00:05

Joe 00:05

Thank you, everyone. My name is Joe, and I'm an alcoholic. And it's truly by God's grace and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous that I found in a book called Alcoholics Anonymous. I'm sober today, and for that, I'm very, very thankful.

Charlie 00:20

Hi, everybody. My name is Charlie Farmlett. I'm very grateful, Recovering Alcoholic. Hi, Charlie. Because I'm a member of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, and by the grace of the power that I found in the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I haven't found it necessary to take a drink for 10,516 days today, one day at a time, and for this I'm grateful. Great to be here. Joe leaned over a while ago and he said, Charlie, this is one of the finest-looking bunches of sick people we've seen in a long time. We always like to say as we start one of these things that we do not consider ourselves to be the gurus of the big book Alcoholics Anonymous. We don't consider ourselves to be the experts on anything at all. We're just two old drunks met together several years ago, found we had a mutual interest in the big book. We've studied it together for quite some time. Hopefully, we've learned a few things about it. And those few things we've learned about it, we just love to be able to share them with other people. We do not attempt to speak for AA as a whole, and you are most certainly free to agree or disagree with anything that we say throughout the entire weekend as you see fit. In fact, if you hear us saying things that can't be reconciled with what's in the big book Alcoholics Anonymous, we suggest you just don't pay any attention to those things. And we'll do our best to keep most of our conversation centered on the book itself. If we're going to study the big book Alcoholics Anonymous, which of course that's what we're here for this weekend, I think it would be well if we would go back and look at just a little bit of the history behind the book, be able to see what happened to some of the first people that put this thing together. And by looking at that history, then it's going to make it a lot easier to understand the book itself as we go through that. And what we'd like to do to look at some of the history is go to the foreword to

the second edition, Roman numeral 15, and we'll start with the last paragraph on that page. So, everybody that's got your books, if you're ready, Roman numeral 15 and the last paragraph on that page,

Foreword to the Second Edition: the spark in Akron, 1935

02:46

Joe 02:46

Joe? One of the things that's helped me over the years and studying Bill's writings, and he does this in most all of his writings. So, if you kind of follow along with what he does, and you can help you understand some of his writings, for instance, he'll always tell us what the problem is, then he'll just tell us a solution to that problem, and then he'll give us a practical program of action to implement the solution that he just described. He does that in most all cases in his writing, so that kind of helped me in understanding how Bill writes. So, on the bottom of the page on the Roman numeral, page 15, he said the spark that was to flare in the first AA group was struck in Akron, Ohio in June 1935 during a talk between a New York stockbroker and an Akron physician.

Charlie 03:29

Now, we know that New York stockbroker to be this fellow named Bill Wilson. I think we're treating Bill pretty good when we call him a New York stockbroker. He really wasn't. he was a New York city stock speculator. He made his living out of selling fast, talking to slow-thinking people. I don't want to take anything away from Bill because he's a great man. But I think we all need to realize that he's a real alcoholic, just like all the rest of us. And understanding that, it'll make it easier to understand the book, because, after all, Bill is the primary author of the book. The Akron physician is this fellow named Dr. Bob

Joe 04:10

Smith. Six months earlier, the broker had been relieved of his drink obsession by a sudden spiritual experience following a meeting with an alcoholic friend who'd been in contact with the octa groups of that day. A little later on,

Ebby Thatcher brings Bill the solution and program of action

04:22

Charlie 04:22

we're going to get into Bill's story, and we're going to see in Bill's story where he had what he always called a vital spiritual experience in the town's hospital in December of 1934. But prior to him having that spiritual experience, certain things had to take place in Bill's life. And one of

the things was that this meeting with the alcoholic friend took place in the latter part of November 1934, and this was a fellow named Ebby Thatcher. And Ebby Thatcher came with Bill and sat down in with Bill in his Bill's kitchen, and he gave Bill what turned out to be two vital pieces of information. He said, Bill, people like you and I, who have become absolutely powerless over alcohol, if we're going to recover from that condition, we're going to have to have the aid of a power greater than human power. He said the doctors and the ministers and the psychiatrists have tried to help people like us, but the human power doesn't seem to be able to do the job. And he said, we'll have to have the aid of a power greater than human power. And he said, I've been attending meetings with a group of people called the Oxford Groupers, and they told me if I could have a spiritual experience, that during that spiritual experience I would be able to find that power and I would be able to recover from alcoholism. He said, Also, they have given me a practical program of action. And they guaranteed me if I would follow that program of action, I would have the spiritual experience, I would find the power and I would be able to recover from alcoholism. And he said, Look at me, Bill. It's been two months since I've had a drink. Now, Bill knew about Ebby Thatcher, and he knew how Ebby drank. In fact, Bill had always said: if I ever get as bad as Ebby Thatcher, I'm going to quit drinking. And here's Ebby sitting in Bill's kitchen, and Bill is about two-thirds drunk, and Ebby's been sober for two months. This made a great impression on Bill when he told him of the solution, the vital spiritual experience, and he told him of the practical program of action necessary to have that spiritual experience. But that isn't everything Bill had to know.

Dr. Silkworth and the nature of the illness: allergy and obsession

06:44

Joe 06:44

Let's go a little further. He said he had also been greatly helped by the late Dr. William D. Silkworth, a New York specialist in alcoholism, who is now a kind of no less than a medical scene by AA members, and whose story of the early days of our society appears in the next pages. And from this doctor, the brokerage learned the grave nature of alcoholism.

Charlie 07:04

Again, as we get into Bill's story, we'll be able to see how, as far back as the summer of 1933, Bill was placed in the town's hospital for withdrawal from alcohol by Dr. Silkworth. And after he had been in there a few days and his mind kind of cleared up, Dr. Silkworth sat down with Bill and began to explain to him his ideas about this thing concerning alcoholism. And he said, Bill, I do not believe that alcoholism is a matter of willpower. I do not believe it's a matter of moral character. And I don't think sin's got anything to do with it. He said, I believe people like you are suffering from an illness. And he said, It seems to be a very peculiar illness. It's a two-

fold illness, an illness of the body as well as an illness of the mind. And he said, I think what has happened to people like you is you have become absolutely physically allergic to alcohol. And it seemed to me as though any time you put any alcohol whatsoever into your system. It develops an actual physical craving which makes it virtually impossible for you to stop drinking after you have once started. And he said, because of that allergy, which produces that physical craving, you'll never be able to safely drink alcohol again. And he said, You also have developed what we refer to as an obsession of the mind. And he said, an obsession of the mind is an idea that overcomes all other ideas to the contrary. And he said, it really doesn't make any difference how badly you want to stop drinking. From time to time, your obsession of the mind to drink will be so strong that it will overcome any ideas not to drink, and your mind will actually lead you to believing it's okay to take a drink. And he said, then you'll take that drink, and then you'll trigger that allergy, and you'll be unable to stop. He said, you can't safely drink because of your body, you can't stay sober because of your mind, therefore, you've become absolutely powerless over alcohol. Now, Bill knew that in the summer of 1933, but knowing the problem didn't solve it, because if shortly after that, his mind told him it was okay to drink. And he took a drink and triggered the allergy and drank for another year. In the summer of 1934, he was placed back in the hospital again to be withdrawn from alcohol by Dr. Silkworth. And this time, Dr. Silkworth pronounced him incurable and told Bill's wife, Lois, that this guy is either going to die from DTs or he's going to become completely insane from a wet brain, and you're going to have to lock him up or hire a bodyguard if you expect him to live. And Bill overheard that, and he said this time fear sobered him for a bit. But then on Armistice Day, 1934, his mind told him it was okay to drink. And he took a drink and triggered the allergy and couldn't stop drinking. It's only after Ebby came to see him and gave him a solution to that problem and gave him a program of action that Bill was able to recover. So basically, he had to know three things. He had to know the problem. He got that from doctor Silkworth. He had to know the solution and the program of action. That came to him from Ebby. And then Bill was able to have his spiritual experience and recover from alcoholism.

Bill works with alcoholics; Silkworth's advice on the message

10:44

Joe 10:44

And Ebby began to take Bill to his Oxford group meetings after that. And he said, though he could not accept all the tenets of the Oxford group, he was convinced of the need of moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution of those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God, which were the tenets of the Oxford group, which were later on expanded into the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. Now, prior to

his journey to Akron, the broke had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic. But he succeeded only in keeping sober himself. After Bill got out of the hospital that last time, he began to try to help other people. He began to go out and sane them up out of the gutters and take them to these Oxford group meetings. He began to go into the bars and dragging them off a bar stool and taking them to the Oxford group meetings. Most of them didn't want to go, but he was taking them anyhow. He's trying to sober up the world. He had lots of enthusiasm. Well, after a few months of trying to do this, why nobody was staying sober but Bill. And he went to Lois and he said, Lois, I'm trying to help these people, these alcoholics, stay sober. Nobody seems to want us to stay sober. And he said, well, she said, Why don't you go talk to Dr. Silkworth and see what he has to say? So he went over to talk to Dr. Silkworth and told him the same story. And Dr. Silkworth said, Yes, I've heard some of the shenanigans you're pulling out there on the streets. He said,, You know Bill, you're staying sober, so obviously trying to help other people is helping you stay sober. And he said, You're talking to those drunks about that great spiritual experience that you had, and a drunk just won't accept that. He said, Why don't you do for them what I did for you? Why don't you talk to them about the illness of alcoholism? Talk to them about the physical allergy and the obsession of the mind. Show them through your experience how that worked for you, and if they will accept that, then maybe you can talk to them about spiritual matters.

Akron, the Mayflower Hotel, and the meeting with Dr. Bob

12:32

Charlie 12:32

He said, Bill, every alcoholic I know has two questions. Number one, why can't I drink like I used to without getting drunk all the time? And number two, why can't I quit drinking now that I want to? And he said, if you will explain to them the exact nature of the illness, tell them about the physical allergy of the body and the obsession of the mind, you'll get their attention. And he said, then, after you get their attention, you can talk to them about spirituality. But tell them what the problem is first. Our book said the broker had gone to Aquin on a business venture, which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that, in order to save himself, he must carry his message to another alcoholic, and that alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician. We all know the story of Bill going to Akron. He and some other guys have put a business deal together. They're going to take over one of the companies there in Akron just through a proxy fight. And while there, the whole thing blew up in their face. And his friends all deserted him and left him there in Akron, standing in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, low, sad, and depressed, counting the money in his pocket, realized he didn't even have enough money to pay his hotel bill. He happened to

look through a door off the lobby into the bar, and I would assume probably the lights were low in the bar, the music was probably playing in the bar, the laughter was great and the smoke was thick, and Bill's mind said, I'll leave I'll go in there and be with people of my kind, and I'll feel better. And as he started through the door, his mind began to think about taking a drink. And Bill suddenly realized that if he went at bar, he was going to end up drunk. But he remembered how back in New York City. Every time he'd tried to help another alcoholic, even though he had failed with him, every time he had tried, he himself had felt better. So he said to himself, What I better do is find me a drunk here in Akron to talk to. Made a few phone calls, came in contact with a lady named Henrietta Seiberly. And Henrietta said, Yeah, I know a guy that you can talk to. Said, let me call him and see if I can't set up a meeting for you. So she calls Dr. Bob's house and got hold of Ann Smith, Bob's wife, and said, There's a fellow here from New York City that says he may have a possible means that Dr. Bob could recover from alcoholism. Can you bring Dr. Bob over for a visit? And Anne said, Well, I'd like to, but she said, You know, this is the day before Mother's Day, and he brought me home a potted plant, and it's sitting on the table, and he's potted underneath the table. She said, Let me wait until the morning and see if I can get him to come over. So of course the next morning, as soon as Dr. Bob woke up, she set in on him to go over to Henrietta's and see this guy and talk to this guy from New York City. Now, you know, Dr. Bob didn't feel very good the next morning. Hung over and felt bad, and he said, I'm not going. And Ann kept after him and kept after him and kept after him, and finally, finally, Dr. Bob said, I'll go over there and give that guy 15 minutes of my time. And then I'm coming back home. So Ann took him over there, and Bill and Bob went into a room by themselves. And they stayed in that room for literally hours. And Dr. Bogg came out of that room and he said, This is the first man I've ever met that knows what he's talking about when he talks about alcoholism. Let's see what happened to him.

Carrying the problem, not the solution, to Dr. Bob

16:21

Joe 16:21

He said the possession had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma, but it failed.

Charlie 16:26

Bill was surprised to find out Dr. Bob was already in the Oxford groups. He knew more about the solution, the spiritual experience, and the program of action that Bill knew. But he had never been able to apply it to the depth necessary to recover because he didn't know what was wrong with him. You see, he thought it was willpower. He thought it was moral character. He thought it was sin. Why would he not? That's what everybody had told him up until that time.

And what really interested him was the message that Bill had to carry regarding the problem, not the solution, not the program of action, but

Joe 17:07

what alcoholism really consists of. He said, but when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth's description of alcoholism and his hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy with a malady, for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. You know, Bill went in there, and this time, for the first time, he began to talk to Dr. Bob about the allergy to alcoholism. He told him that every time he would go down by the bar and had every intention to have a drink or two. He would drink more than he intended to, and he'd drink more that night or the next day, and he'd be off and running again. And he said, This Dr. Silkworth had told him that that was a physical allergy that caused him to want to crave more drinks after he took a drink. And Dr. Bob said, Well, yes, I drink just like that. You know, you really know what you're talking about. That's the way I drink, too. I would want to have one or two drinks, and the next thing I know is I drink three, four, five, ten, or fifteen, or twenty, and didn't know how I got started. He said, that you call that a physical allergy. He said, that's right. And he said, another thing, he said, when I'm not drinking, when I'm sober, I have these thoughts that I want to drink all the time. It's always on my mind. And Dr. Silkworth said that's the obsession of the mind, that we're obsessed with the idea to drink. And Dr. Bob said, Well, I have those same kinds of thoughts. You really know what you're talking about. So they wish to report through the illness of alcoholism and explained it in great detail. And Dr. Bob said, That's me, that's just the way I drink. You really know what you're talking about. So they had some identification going.

Bill Dotson, the man on the bed; the first three recover

18:39

Charlie 18:39

You know, this is the first time that Bill had tried this. Everybody back in New York City, he had always talked to him about the solution, the great spiritual experience, the big white flash he had had in a town's hospital. When he sat down with Dr. Bob, he didn't talk to Dr. Bob at all about Dr. Bob's drinking either. I'm sure that's what Dr. Bob expected to hear. Everybody else had talked to him about his drinking. But Bill said, Let me tell you about my drinking. And through the sharing of his story, talking about his own allergy, Dr. Bob could see himself immediately in it. Through the sharing of his own story, talking about his obsession of the mind, Dr. Bob could see himself immediately in it, and he could see where he had become absolutely powerless over alcohol. And for the first time, he was completely defeated when it

comes to alcohol. Then he began to apply the little program of action to a depth he had never been able to do before. Then he had a spiritual experience and he recovered from alcoholism too. Now, this seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no non-alcoholic could. You know, through the sharing of our story with a new person, we can affect them as no non-alcoholic could because we have immediate identification about the physical allergy, about the obsession of the mind, about the way we think and the things that we do. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery. Remember, Bill was about to get drunk. And he really didn't go see Dr. Bob to sober up Dr. Bob. He went to see Dr. Bob to keep Bill Wilson from drinking. So it proved that night that working with another alcoholic was vital for our own recovery, too. Now, immediately, one of the Oxford Group tenants was: you've got to give it away if you're going to keep it. So immediately they made a decision we're going to have to find this another alcoholic to talk to. And Dr. Bob called the Akron City Hospital where he was actually working at that time, talked to the head nurse and said, Do you have an alcoholic down there that we can come and hook to? We believe we found a way to help them overcome alcoholism. And she said, Oh, yeah. She said, we've got a real one down here. Said he's just back blacked both eyes, one of the nurses. Said we've got him tied down in bed. And Dr. Bob said, put him in a private room. We'll be down in the morning to see him. And she said, okay. And by the way, Dr. Bob, have you tried this on

Joe 21:23

yourself?

Charlie 21:26

So the next morning they go down to see this fellow, he's named Bill Dotson, and you see the picture in AA rooms all over the world of the man on the bed. And this is Bill and Bob sitting there talking to Bill Dotson. Now they didn't talk to Bill Dotson about Bill Dotson's drinking. They talked to him about their own drinking. And through the sharing of their stories, Bill Dotson could immediately see what his problem was. See, he had never known about the allergy and the obsession of the mind. He could accept the fact that he was absolutely powerless over alcohol, and he would have to have the aid of a power greater than himself in order to recover. They began to talk to him about the need for the spiritual experience, how they had found that necessary to apply those things in their lives in order to recover. They told him how they applied the little program of action and the results that they got. Two days later, Bill Dotson said to his wife, Get my clothes out of the closet, I'm going home. And he gets up and he dresses and he goes home and he starts applying the program of action. And lo and behold, he had a vital spiritual experience, and he recovered from alcoholism also. Now, this makes three of them. In the summer of 1935, in Akron, they all three know the problem. They

all three know the solution. They've all three applied the program of action. They've had a spiritual experience and they have recovered from alcoholism.

Summer of 1935: learning from failures

22:58

Joe 22:58

So this work continued. This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success.

Charlie 23:07

You know, we always give credit to Bill and Bob in the first 100, which rightly we should. But if we would go back and think about that summer of 1935, these guys really had, they didn't have much idea about what they were doing. They had found a few simple things that had worked for them. And they would try this on many, many different people that summer. And if it worked, then they would keep it. And if something didn't work, they might discard that. Learning as they went through that summer working with people. I know one of Dr. Bob's favorite things was to fill them up with sour kraut juice mixed with honey. He knew that there were vitamins in that sauerkraut juice that would help the body and of course the honey was a form of energy. And they tried that amongst many different things. And every once in a while one of these guys would fall over dead. I can almost see Bill turn to Bob and say, oh shit, let's go do that again. I think maybe we ought to give credit to those they failed with that summer, too. They probably learned more from their failures than they did

The first groups form; the decision to write a book

24:20

Joe 24:20

from their successes. Said when the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first AA group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time. You know, this little group of alcoholics that was going to the Oxford group, you know, they were having troubles with the Oxford group because the Oxford groups had four absolutes. And the drunks were having trouble being absolutely anything, as we well know. They couldn't practice that. And it seemed like that these drunks liked to stand off in a corner someplace and drink coffee and smoke cigarettes and tell stories, not necessarily mix in with the other Oxford group meeting members. So they begin to call them the drunk squad or the Oxford groups. And that's what they like, to separate themselves from the normal Oxford group members.

Charlie 25:07

The book says, a second small group had promptly taken shape at New York. When Bill went back to New York City, he began to apply there what he had learned in Akron. Instead of talking about spirituality, he talked to the new people there about the exact nature of the illness. And sure enough, he got their attention. Some of them began to respond. And a second little group started in New York City. And besides, there were scattered alcoholics who had picked up the basic ideas in Akron or New York and were trying to form AA groups in other cities? By late 1937, the number of members having substantial sobriety time behind them was sufficient to convince the membership that a new light had entered the dark world of the alcoholic. In the summer of 1937, Bill was back in Akron, again on a business venture, and he decided to go by and see Dr. Bob and see how things were going in Akron. And they sat down in Dr. Bob's kitchen and they counted the number of people they knew that were staying sober based on these three little pieces of information. And they found approximately 40 people sober. And I think it's the first time that they really begin to realize maybe we really have found the answer to this thing called alcoholism. And if we found the answer, then we need to get it to as many alcoholics as we possibly can. So the question immediately becomes: well, what's the best way to do that? And maybe this is the beginning of the group conscience. Because Bill and Bob decided they didn't want to make that decision themselves. It was too important. And they called a meeting of the Oxford group there in Akron. and at that meeting that night, there were 18 people there, some alcoholic, some non-alcoholic. And the topic of conversation was: how can we best carry this message of recovery to the greatest number of people. Now they decided that night to do three things. In those days, you could hardly get an alcoholic in a hospital for detoxification. Any doctor that put one in there had to lie about their condition. Alcoholism wasn't very popular in the 1930s, that's for sure. So they decided, now remember, this is in the midst of the Depression now in 1932. Nobody has a dime, hardly at all. And they decided what they needed to do was to build a chain of hospitals stretching all the way across the United States where any alcoholic that needed it would be able to have detoxification. I would assume Dr. Bob was going to be the head doctor. They also felt that this little message of recovery they had was so vital that not everybody could be entrusted with carrying it correctly. So they decided they needed to hire a group of individuals, train them, and then let them spread out across the United States, more or less as missionaries, to carry this message of recovery. I would assume Bill Wilson was going to be the head missionary, too. Then they said, you know, the Oxford groups have written a lot of books, spiritual in nature, and they've been very popular. Back in the 1930s, people read a lot of books. This was in the days before television. There really was a time before television, believe me, there was. And they felt that if they could come up with a book on alcoholism, what it is, and the solution to it, and a way to bring that about, the first comprehensive book on alcoholism the world had ever seen, that then surely

this book would become one of the world's greatest bestsellers. And they can take the profits from the book and build the hospitals and train the missionaries. That was one reason behind the book. But I think the main reason behind the book was that they had already noticed carrying this message one-on-one, one person to another, that it already had begun to be changed. And you know how people are when we hear something good, well, we like to repeat it. But we'll usually add just a little bit to it. And then the next one will add a little more and a little more and a little more, and after a while, it doesn't resemble the first thing. And they said, what we really need to do is take these three pieces of information about the problem, the solution, and a program of action, put it down in a written form, where it will no longer be changed, no longer be garbled, and any alcoholic anywhere in the world in the future would have this same information, and it would be pure. And they made the decision that night to write the big book Alcoholics Anonymous. Now, thank God only one of the three things they decided that night came true. They never did get to build the hospitals because the book didn't make very much money in the beginning. They didn't get to hire and train the missionaries, but they did get to write the

Naming the book Alcoholics Anonymous

30:20

Joe 30:20

book. So this determination bore fruit in the spring of 1939 by the publication of this volume. The membership had then reached about 100 men and women, and after they wrote the book, they sat down one night at a meeting and they were trying to determine what they're going to call the book. They needed the title for the book. Someone said, Well, let's call it the way out. That sounds like a pretty good name for a book. That is some research on that some later, and they found out there were some 10 or 12 other books called the Way Out, so they discarded that. Somebody else suggested, well, let's call it Comes the Dawn. Now, that sounds like a pretty good title for a book. And they discussed that a while and kicked that around and decided not to do that. Somebody said, let's call it 100 men. Now, that really sounds like a good name of a book. Well, then a woman joined the group. Well, they couldn't call it 100 men and a woman. So they discarded that idea. Bill suggested that: hey, let's call it the Bill W movement. They discussed that about five minutes and kicked that out. And then one evening, someone suggested that we're alcoholics and we want to remain anonymous. How about anonymous alcoholics or alcoholics anonymous? That caught on. And that's what they call the book: Alcoholics. Anonymous And the first Alcoholics Anonymous that the world has ever seen was a book called Alcoholics Anonymous. And it says here: this fledgling society, this drunk squad of the Oxford group, which had been nameless now, began to be called Alcoholics Anonymous

from the title of its own book. So we have two Alcoholics Anonymous, don't we? We have a book entitled Alcoholics Anonymous, and then we have a fellowship entitled Alcoholics Anonymous, two AAs, and we still have that today.

How the fellowship drifted from the program in the book

32:05

Charlie 32:05

Now, I think this is very important for us to think about this group of people who had been nameless, or who had been known as the drunk squad of the Oxford groups, wrote a book, and in that book they put their program of recovery. And they called the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Then, after the book was published, they then decided to call themselves Alcoholics Anonymous. Now, in 1939, the program in the book Alcoholics Anonymous and the program and the fellowship Alcoholics Anonymous were exactly the same. The book then began to go out across the United States. And the first person out here in California got a copy of this book. Read it, studied it, did what it said, recovered from alcoholism, started a group called Alcoholics Anonymous. The first person in Arkansas got a copy of this book, read it, studied, did what it said, recovered, started a group called Alcoholics Anonymous. Now, the growth of the fellowship began to come from the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Now, as the fellowship began to grow and get bigger and bigger and bigger, they began to notice something that the first 100 didn't have. They begin to notice the great power of a fellowship of people who have escaped from a common problem. Now, the first 100 didn't have that, they only had 100 people, period. But the fellowship, as it grew and got bigger and bigger and bigger, and they began to experience the power of fellowship, they then began to question the need for the severity of the program in the book. And they said, Do you mean we really have to turn all of our will and our life over to the care of God as we understand Him? Couldn't we give Him the drinking and keep the rest? Do you mean we're going to have to share all of our life story with another human being? Hell, God already knows about it. We know about it. Why tell somebody else? They begin to say, You mean we have to have God remove all of our character defects? Hell, we won't have any personality left if He does. And they begin to talk about, Do you mean we have to make amends to all those people we've harmed, and they begin to say such things as, well, maybe we don't need to do every bit of that. Maybe we could take some of it and leave some of it. Maybe we can do it cafeteria style. Pick what we want and leave that that we don't want. And then, along about that time, came the great advent of the treatment centers. Now, please don't get us wrong, we have nothing against the treatment center. They serve a worthwhile purpose. But in the treatment centers, people begin to hear some other type of words and some other languages. They begin to go into a group therapy thing, and they begin

to sit around the tables and talk about their problems, and they begin to develop such terms as the dysfunctional family, and they began to use such words as chemical dependency. And they began to talk about significant others. And they began to discuss meaningful relationships. And they began to talk about dysfunctional sex. And they began to talk about this, and they began to talk about that. And the program in the treatment center wasn't like the program in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Well, naturally, the new people from the treatment centers coming into AA wanted to talk about what they knew to talk about is what they had learned in other places. And slowly, slowly, slowly, the program and the fellowship began to change. And as the years went by, it began to change more and more and more. And it began to talk about significant others. And they began to discuss meaningful relationships. And they began to talk about dysfunctional sex. And they began to talk about this, and they began to talk about that. And the program in a treatment center wasn't like the program in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. Well, naturally, the new people from the treatment centers coming into AA wanted to talk about what they knew to talk about is what they had learned in other places. And slowly, slowly, slowly, the program and the fellowship began to change. And as the years went by, it began to change more and more and more. We like to refer to those meetings as group depression meetings. You go in there feeling pretty good. Halfway through the meeting, you might as well just go ahead and blow your brains out. Hell, it's not even worth living any longer. So, what we're going to talk about this weekend is not the program in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous today. We're going to talk about the program in the book Alcoholics Anonymous that the first 100 used, which has never been changed. The program in the fellowship has definitely changed. The program in the book has never changed. Let's go to Roman numeral 20. Let's see how effective this thing used to be when the program and the book and the program and the fellowship were the same.

Early recovery rates and the charge to the listener

37:47

Joe 37:47

He said, while the internal difficulties of our adolescent period were being ironed out, public acceptance grew by AA grew by leaps and bounds. For this, there were two principal reasons: the large number of recoveries and reunited homes. Now, these made their impressions everywhere. Of alcoholics who came to A and really tried, 50% got sober at once and remained that way. 25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with AA showed improvement. Other thousands came to a few AA meetings at first decided they didn't want the program, but great numbers of these, about two out of three, begin to return as time passed. That my math is correct, that's 75% of those people who came to AA in

the early days and worked the programs in the book stayed sober eventually. I don't know in my area, I don't know what it's like in your area, but we can't talk about 75%. We can't talk about 50%. We can't talk about 25%. I doubt if we could talk about 10%, truthfully. And the reason for that, I believe, is that the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous got away from the program that's in the book called Alcoholics Anonymous, and that worked. And so, what we're going to do this weekend, as Charlie said, we're going to talk about the fellowship that's in the program called Alcoholics Anonymous. And we're going to ask each and every one of you to go back to your groups and listen to the conversation that you hear around the tables and see how closely it tallies with the program that's in the book called Alcoholics Anonymous. And if it doesn't, we suggest you do something about it. That's our charge to you this weekend.

Charlie 39:26

You know, a lot of we older. A lot of we older members of Alcoholics Anonymous tend to blame this problem on the newcomer. The newcomer comes in here and they want to talk about the only thing they know to talk about. And too many of us older members have said, well, we can't identify with those people anymore, so we're just going to stay home. And we do. We've abdicated our responsibility for Alcoholics Anonymous. We've turned it over to the sickest of the sickest who are the newcomers. And then we stand back and say, look what they're doing to RAA. No, I think that's our responsibility to be sure that every newcomer that walks in the door, that we tell them that stuff you've learned, wherever you learned it, is probably good information, but that is not AA information. Here's AA information. And we start talking about the program of recovery in the book Alcoholics Anonymous. And we take them by the hand, and we lead them through this program of recovery so they can have a spiritual awakening also. I think they call that sponsorship, and that's sorely, sorely lacking in AA today. But I think that's our responsibility. It's not the responsibility of the new people, it's the responsibility of we older members. And we need to stand up and stand pat and insist that in our meetings we talk about alcoholism, recovery therefrom, the program in the book, and I'll just bet you we can see more people recover from alcoholism. Probably never will get back to 75%, but we can certainly do better than we're doing today. Now, we're not going to preach anymore. That's all the preaching for this entire weekend, I guarantee you. Hope you don't believe that now that we know a little bit about the history, let's go back to the table of contents. Let's look at it for just a moment. And let's see if we can't see the same pattern in this book that the first 100 used. Do all of you have one of these little folders like this? Okay, we're going to put a picture up here on this screen, and I know some of you will hardly be able to see it at all from its location, but you'll have a picture in that book which will match it if you can't see it.

How the book is laid out: problem, solution, action

41:57

Joe 41:57

You know, I'm in the printing business, and I have been all my life, and I print books like this. I've been in conversation with many people on how to lay out a book. And when I started reading this book, Alcoholics, and I guess I must have had brain damage or something, but it never dawned on me that this book was laid out any particular way. After all, a bunch of old alcoholics wrote it, so what would they know about laying out a book? I thought, so I didn't pay attention to that. Come to find out, though, this book have had lots of good information, lots of good help with laying out this book. This book is laid out in a particular manner to bring about certain ideas. Each chapter is very, very important. Each page is very, very important. Each paragraph is very, very important. One paragraph leads to the next, the information in that paragraph, in that page leads to the next. And that's the way it goes in this book. I'll call it everything is important. And it's laid out in a certain sequence to bring about certain ideas. Most books have three particular goals, especially this one does. And the first goal in this book, it tells us what the problem is. That's the goal number one. And they're going to use the doctor's opinion and Bill's story basically to tell us what the problem is. And then the second goal is going to be the solution. They're going to give us a solution to the problem they described. And they know we're going to have problems with that solution, just like they did. So they're going to talk chapter two: there is a solution. Chapter three, more about alcoholism. The solution has to do with spiritual matters, and they know that we're going to have some of those problems. So they wrote down chapter 4 called We Agnostics for those of us who had problems in that area. And then the third goal is actions necessary for recovery. and beginning, and we're going to begin with how it works in chapter 5. And chapter 6 is into action. Chapter 7 is working with others. So, this book is laid out in particular reasons to bring about certain ideas all the way across, all the way through the book. And that helped me in studying the book.

The chapters correspond to the Steps

43:53

Charlie 43:53

I hear people today talking about going to a step study meeting, and they're always referring to studying the steps out of the 12 and 12. But if you'll notice that these chapters correspond with the steps, also, and anytime you're studying a big book, you're studying the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. In that doctor's Opinion and bill's story. We're going to see nearly all the information, a little bit of it in Chapter 2 and 3, but most of it will be in the Doctor's Opinion and Bill's story. We'll be able to see everything that we need to in order to see what our problem

really is. And we'll be able to see where we're absolutely powerless over alcohol and our lives have become unmanageable. And really, that's step one. Step one, if we wanted to boil it down to this one word, would be powerless. Then when we can see that powerless condition, then obviously the answer to that's going to be power. And remember, Abby told Bill it has to be the aid of a power greater than human power. So, through chapters 2, 3, and 4, we're going to be able to see that power, and we're going to get some new information about spirituality, so we'll be able to come to believe that maybe that power could help us also. And there we're dealing with step two. That's the power. We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Well, if we know we're powerless and we know we need the power, then the only other thing we need to know is how do you find that power? And that's what chapters 5, 6, and 7 are about. There we will see the last ten steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. And if we follow them, we will have a spiritual awakening. We will have found the power, and we're no longer powerless over alcohol. I read this book for years before I saw that sequence. The same identical sequence that Bill and Bob and the first 100 had to know. What is the problem? Step one. What is the solution? Step two. What is the program of action necessary to find it? Steps three through twelve. Now you begin to study the book in this manner, it becomes a very fascinating book to see how each chapter ties into the next chapter to convey these certain ideas in the proper sequence, table of contents. Okay, let's go over for just a few moments to the preface, Roman numeral 11. And the second paragraph on Roman numeral 11. 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 exists a sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. Therefore, the first portion of this volume describing the AA recovery program has been left untouched in the course of revisions made for both the second and third editions. And I think there's two ideas there. First, when we see the words basic text, I think we're alerted to the type of book we have in front of us. All kinds of books in the world today. You've 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.

The textbook analogy and starting newcomers at chapter five

47:33

Joe 47:33

Every time I saw the word textbook, all I could think about was cheat. I

Charlie 47:37

don't know why. I remembered about how back in school when we used a textbook, you 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 AA today, the very idea of a textbook just completely turns them off. But if you would take a textbook in its 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 textbook. And that's all teaching is. A lot of people today say you can't teach in AA, 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 every day, and we're all being taught every day. 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. 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. 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 could probably count to 21 if he's standing there naked and got everything where it belongs, he might make 21. 20 and a half, actually. And if I handed him a textbook on mathematics and I said, Joe, I want you to go to chapter 5 and work the algebra problems. Well, being a good fellow, he would go to chapter 5 and look at them. But he can't even add and subtract. They just look like marks on paper to him. But if I say Joe, chapter 1 in this textbook on mathematics deals with the value of numbers in addition and subtraction. If you'll read it and study it and let me help you, by the time you're through with chapter 1, 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 it, 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 AA today. Newcomer comes to the door, we hand them the book, and we say, Go to chapter 5 and do what it says, and you'll be okay. And they go to chapter 5 and they run into a series of algebra problems. Step 1 said, We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, our lives have become unmanageable. The newcomer said, Man, I'm not powerless over anything. They have no idea what we mean by that statement. Step two said, came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. The newcomer said, 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. They have no idea what we mean by that statement. Well, if you're not powerless and you're not nuts, then you don't need 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 the idea of the value of the doctor's opinion in 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 five? You see, chapter five starts with step three. And it's very difficult to start with three unless you've got one and two behind you. Hopefully, we'll be able to see that. I think the other thing that is so important, there exists a sentiment against any radical changes being made in it. The first edition of the big book Alcoholics Anonymous, and by the way, this happens to be a second printing of it. You'll notice how big this second printing is. The actual letters and size is the same as your book today, but you'll also notice that it had very wide margins on the pages. The alcoholic mind says the bigger the book, the better it'll sell. So that's why they call it a big book. It's a big book. They printed it on the thickest, the cheapest old paper they could find. Cheap paper is thick, is 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's going to. I can see Bill Wilson all the way through this book. Real con. 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 1955, 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. And 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. 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 fun things today they did back in 1939. Haven't changed a lick. 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. Human nature never changes. It's the same today as it was in 2,000 years ago. And that's what this book deals with. 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 certainly has rewritten it at least twice in their minds. Collectively, though, we've never found it necessary,

Foreword to the First Edition: 'We' and 'recovered'

55:06

Joe 55:06

Joe. Let's go to the forward to the first edition, Roman numeral, page 13. He said, We, and I think that's probably the largest word in Alcoholics Anonymous. We can do what I can't do. We of Alcoholics Anonymous are more than 100 men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. They're already beginning to tell us again what the problem is. It's a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. And a little later on tonight, we're going to separate those two ideas: the body from the mind, to talk about them in great detail. And it says, to show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book. You notice that the word precisely how we have recovered is in italics. Charlie would have you to believe that it's squiggly writing. It isn't, it's italics. Squiggly writing. Yeah. And anytime you see squiggly, oh, ski, he's got me doing it now. Anytime you see italics in this book, it becomes very, very important. Probably ought to read it again. And it says precisely. Later on in the book, we're going to find words such as specifically, exactly with clear-cut directions. So, this book is not a book on just about how to recover from alcoholism. This book is going to tell us precisely, specifically, exactly, with clear-cut directions on how to recover from alcoholism. And if I want to recover from alcoholism, guess what? I need to do it precisely, specifically, and exactly, and try to follow the clear-cut direction as best I can. Otherwise, I may not recover from alcoholism.

Charlie 56:40

I think we see a couple of things here that's extremely important. First, we are more than 100 men and women. Most books that I read have been authored by one person. And when I read a book authored by one person, if I see something in there, I don't agree with it. With my keen intellectual alcoholic mind, I usually say, Who in the hell are they to think they're smarter than I am? And I just ignore it. But I've got to realize with the big book. But if I'm going to argue with it, I'm going to be arguing with 100 people, not one. The first 40 said, Bill, we want you to write the book. You know more about it than anybody else. You've been sober longer than anybody else, which, by the way, was just a little over three years at that time. But they said, Bill, this is not to be your book, it's to be our book. And as you write those chapters, we want to see them. And we will add to, delete from, and change around whatever we want to. When we're through with it, it'll be the collective knowledge, experience, and wisdom of all 40 of us. Over the time the book was published, that 40 had changed to 100. So if I'm going to argue with

it today, I'm going to be arguing with 100 men and women, not just one person. And it's going to be 100 men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body, which brings in the word recovered. I hear people argue about this all over the world. Can you recover from alcoholism? Well, the book says you can. It said the first 100 had recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. Now, I'll never be cured of alcoholism, I will always have the physical allergy. I'll never be able to safely drink alcohol again. But before I came to AA, not only could I not drink it safely, but I couldn't keep from drinking it. And the result, in fact, was I lived in an absolutely hopeless state of mind and body. And I came to AA and I applied the program of action in this book. And I no longer live in that hopeless state of mind and body. I still can't drink, but by golly, I can stay sober. I'll never be cured of alcoholism, but I have recovered from a state of mind and body known as alcoholism. And you're going to see the word recovered and recovering all the way through the book several times. I think that's important. The other thing that is so important is to show other alcoholics precisely how we have done that. You know, if I went to an AA potluck meeting, and let's say you've made a strawberry cake, which happens to be my favorite kind of cake. Just in case you're going to make one. If you ever make me one, that's the kind I like. And I bite into that cake, and God, it's just perfect. The texture's right, the taste is right, everything is just right about it. And I say, Who made this cake? Well, you'll probably say I did. And I'll say, Would you tell me how? And you say, Yeah, I'll be glad to. And you'll sit down and write out for me a precise, specific, clear-cut set of directions on how to make that cake. You'll tell me the ingredients to put in it, the quantity of the ingredients, the sequence in which to mix them together, the temperature at which to bake it, and how long to bake it. Now, if I take your instructions in my kitchen and I follow them precisely as you've laid them out, when that thing comes out of the oven and cools off and I bite into it, I think I can expect it to taste exactly like your cake tasted. But if I get your directions in my kitchen and my keen intellectual and alcoholic mind starts working, it may say, Well, now I'm not sure about six eggs. Maybe we ought to just put four in there. Instead of two cups of sugar, I believe it would be better with three. Instead of baking it at 375, surely four and a quarter would be better. Instead of baking it for 18 minutes, I need to bake it for 25. Now, when it comes out of the oven and I bite into it, you bet you I'm going to be biting into a piece of cake. But I wonder how closely it would resemble your cake, which was my reason for making it in the first place. A precise, specific, clear-cut set of directions on how to recover from alcoholism. We've been around AA long enough to know and fully understand you can't make anybody do anything that they don't want to in AA. The only requirement for membership in Alcoholics Anonymous is a desire to stop drinking. You can stand up in an AA meeting and say, I don't like you people at all. Can hardly drink your lousy old coffee. And every time I read your 12 steps, I vomit. But I'm going to be a

member of AA because I've got a desire to stay sober, there nobody can say a word about that. But that's dealing with membership and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. If you want to recover from alcoholism, there are some things you're probably going to have to do. And that's what this book deals with. It doesn't deal with membership and a fellowship. It deals with recovery from alcoholism. And if we will do as these first 100 did, then surely we can expect to receive what they got: recovery from a hopeless condition of mind and body known as alcoholism.

Charlie's strawberry cake: precise, clear-cut directions

59:00

Joe's story: the alcoholic as a very sick person

62:08

Joe 62:08

And the book says, For them, we hope these pages will prove so convincing that no further authentication be necessary. We think this account of our experiences will help everyone better understand the alcoholic. Many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person. And besides, we're sure our way of living has its advantages for all. In that statement, many do not comprehend that the alcoholic is a very sick person, very important to me. Because when I come to Alcoholics Anonymous, I used to stand in the back of the rooms and I looked down at my feet and I was ashamed. And I had become everything I detested it in a human being. Certainly, thinking that I had an illness of alcoholism was not one of my thoughts. My thought was something like this: I feel like a no-good, rotten SOB, and I'm guilty of everything in the world, so I must be a no-good, rotten SOB, and I thought that was what alcoholism was. Turns out that it wasn't. You know, I've been married and divorced to two women seven times. Would you repeat that? Yeah. Two of them seven times. Phyllis only admits to two of them, but I divorced her to once, and it wasn't even my turn. So she was three. The first one was four, and the second was three. I'm not sure that's a record, but I'll bet it's getting pretty close to it. What do you think? I've heard some people beat that one. But my first wife, she was a great old gal, and I used to drink and go places. I was one of those traveling drunks, you know, and I didn't come back right away either. They used to have a statement around my group that calls that they said that he who leaves and does not return stays gone a long time. And that was me. And from time to time, I'd get drunk and go places, and then I'd come home as if I'd never been away. And when I got home, I looked out in the yard, and all my stuff's laying out in the yard. Y'all know what I mean by stuff, don't you? Dirty undershorts, dirty shirts, unironed clothes. You know, they never throw anything that's clean and ironed. I don't know why that is. They'd file for divorce on me and put a restraining order, make off of the money, make me madder in

hell. And I'd say, after all I'd done to them, I mean, after all I'd done for them, them treating me like that. So one time I was gone a while and I decided I was trying to get back home, you know, and I was serious. So I went to the preacher that my wife, first wife, was going to at that time and had a little conversation with him. And he said, Joe, what seems to be your problem? He asked me. And I didn't know what the problem was. If I knew what I told the man, because I was serious. And I said, Well, I'll tell you what I think the problem is, and it's her. If you live with her, you drink too, I said. Well, he gave me a prescription, a solution, and he said, You must, and boy, did he emphasize that word, you must have faith in these things. And he laid them out for me. Well, I couldn't have any faith in those things. You know why? Because I didn't even believe them. How can you have faith in something that you don't even believe? Thank God for the second step, so I could come to believe. But that was to happen sometime later. So later on, I met and married my other wife. We met in a bar, the zebra lounge. I can almost smell it now. And we were introduced, and she looked at me and said, You know, Joe, you look like my third husband. I said, My God, how many of you had? And she said, two. Yeah. Well, I liked her right away. And we started drinking and having fun and doing all those things. And then it wasn't long after we got married until she started throwing my stuff out in the yard, filing for divorce, though, resting in order. Well, this time I went to a psychiatrist and sat down and talked to him, paid him \$75 an hour, and he said, Mr. McCoy, for \$75 an hour, they'll call you Mr. Said, Mr. McCoy, what seems to be your problem? Well, I didn't know what the problem was. So I told him what I thought it was. It was her and her. If you live with those two, you drink too, I said. Well, he gave me a prescription. He thought I had a volume deficiency. He didn't mention not drinking, so I took the volume and continued to drink, and I got into real trouble now. I mean, really trouble. I got to where I didn't know the difference between my job and the bar. I didn't know the difference between my wife and your wife and my wife and my girlfriend. I got everything all mixed up. Got into a lot of trouble. So, the time I came to the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous, I had become everything I detested in a human being. I did not like who I had become, and I was very, very sick. It wasn't until after I got into listening to and the description of Dr. Silkworth's opinion on alcoholism that I began to understand what I had here. And it wasn't that I was a no-good rotten SOB. I had an illness called alcoholism, a physical allergy coupled with obsession of the mind, and somehow or other, that information helped me overcome some of these ideas that I had. And as I look back now, and I know more about this, you know, the very first 16 printings of this book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Doctor's Opinion was on page one. 1959, in the second edition, they moved the doctor's opinion out of the page one and put it into the Roman numeral sections. And you all know we don't read Roman numeral sections, do we? Who does? And I think that most of us in Alcoholics Anonymous got away from the idea of the doctor's opinion and just looked at Bill's

story, page one. But the information in the doctor's opinion is so important to me and to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous because the rest of the book is going to tell us how to recover from the condition of the body and the mind that Dr. Silkworth described. And I said I was an alcoholic for about two years and I didn't even know what an alcoholic was, really. So let's look at the doctor's opinion in that light.

The Doctor's Opinion and why we never understood the problem

68:08

Charlie 68:08

We start looking at what the problem actually is, and most of us are absolutely amazed to find out what the problem is. Because most of us felt before we came here that it was a matter of willpower. That after all, we had enough willpower that we ought to be able to control our drinking. And we found out that willpower didn't work, then we assumed that we were just crazy. Or maybe we thought it was moral character. Or maybe we thought we were just sinful, rotten people. Now, why wouldn't we think that? That's what everybody had told us up to this point. And throughout the history of humankind, they've been trying to find out for thousands of years what alcoholism is. You know, you really can't do anything about a problem till you understand the problem. And most of the people that try to determine what alcoholism is were non-alcoholics to start with. They were the ones that said it was a lack of willpower. They said, if you'll just use your willpower like we do, you wouldn't drink that way. They're the ones that said it was moral character. They're the ones that said it was sin. We alcoholics didn't say those things. Hell, we just kept on drinking. Let them worry about what it is. Alcoholism is not anything new. You'll find references to alcoholism as far back as human history is recorded. One of the oldest recordings of human history is to be found in the Bible. And in the book of Proverbs, in the Bible, there's some information there about alcoholism. You know, the book of Proverbs was written by a fellow named Solomon. And you all remember Solomon was a very, very wise, very learned individual. He might have

Joe 70:06

been the first social worker the world's ever seen.

Solomon and Proverbs: alcoholism is nothing new

70:08

Charlie 70:08

Yeah, about ever people had a problem, they went to Solomon to get the answer for it. And apparently, somebody asked him one time about alcoholism, because he describes this in Proverbs. He said, Who has woe, who has sorrow, who has wounds without cause, who has

redness of eyes? Everybody was a wine owl in those days. They didn't have the hard stuff like we got it today. He said, You will be as one who sleepeth in the midst of the sea. Remember how you used to lay down in bed and that old bed started moving around on

Joe 70:45

you?

Charlie 70:47

Or that sleepeth at the top of a tall mast? You know how a mast sways back and forth. He said, You will say they have beaten me, and I felt it

Charlie 71:02

And he surely knew some of us men. He said, and thine eyes shall behold strange women. Alcoholics really haven't changed very much, are they? And thine heart shall utter perverse things. Like, trust me, honey. Please trust me. He said, and yet they will arise in the morning and seek it yet again. Almost a perfect description of alcoholism as we know it today. But he didn't have an answer for it because he didn't know what caused it.