

More About Alcoholism

Joe McQ. & Charlie P. · session 4 of 9

Step Two and what "restored to sanity" really means

00:00

Charlie 00:00

You know, step two says we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Well, if we've got to be restored to sanity, that indicates we must be insane. And many alcoholics are highly offended when you bring this up. They say, Oh, don't tell me I'm insane. Yeah, I do some pretty crazy stupid things when drinking. But when I'm sober, I'm much like normal people. Other alcoholics say, Well, I don't have any trouble with this insanity because I remember the crazy, stupid things I did while drinking. In either case, they're referring to the stupid things we do while drunk. No, that's not insanity. The stupid things we do while drunk, that's caused by a mind that is filled with alcohol, which lowers the inhibitions. And if your mind is filled with something that lowers your inhibitions, look out. You're going to do some pretty crazy stupid things, all right.

Joe 00:55

That's why they give all that free booth downstairs.

Defining sanity: wholeness of mind and the pie analogy

01:00

Charlie 01:00

That's not insanity, that's caused by alcohol itself. In order for us to understand this, we finally had to go back to the dictionary again and to look up the word sanity or the word sane. And it's defined in the dictionary as wholeness of mind or completeness of mind. If your mind is whole, if your mind is complete, that means you can see the truth about everything around you. You will normally make decisions then based on truth, and life turns out to be pretty good. An insane mind is one that is less than whole. A mind that is less than whole cannot always see the truth about everything around it. Sometimes makes a decision based upon a lie, and then life becomes pretty lousy. To be insane does not mean you're crazy. If you're crazy, that means you've lost more than half your marbles. And you've got to be locked up somewhere to protect you and society from you. That's craziness, but insanity is just less than whole. I think one of

the best ways I know to illustrate it is: let's take a pie, set it here in front of us. Let's cut that pie into ten pieces. You come along and I give you a piece of pie. My pie is now less than whole, but hell, I've still got 90% of it. Somebody else comes along, I give them a piece of pie. My pie is now more or less than whole, but I've still got 80% of it. Insanity does not mean you're all gone. It just means you're not quite all here. And when it comes to alcohol from time to time it seems as though we're not quite all here. Because we can't always see the truth about alcohol. We make a decision based upon a lie, then we run into the truth and life becomes an absolute living hell. So let's look within the mind of we alcoholics just before we take the first drink, stone cold, sober. Can we or can we not see the truth? If we can see the truth, we're sane. If we can't, we're insane. Now, Bill is going to show us this by a series of examples. He's going to give us the man of 30. He's going to look at Jim, he's going to look at the Jaywalker, and he's going to look at Fred. And each time we're going to look into the mind to see if we can or cannot see the truth about alcohol. Let's look at it just a few

"More About Alcoholism" as more truth about alcoholism

03:40

Joe 03:40

minutes. This chapter is called more about alcoholism. It could be called more truth about alcoholism. And I've heard all my life: if you know the truth, the truth will set you free. And if you're not free, it's because you don't know the truth. And this chapter here should give me more truth so I can base my life upon truth rather than upon things that are not true. He said, Most of us have been unwilling to admit that we were real alcoholics. No person likes to think that he's bodily and mentally different from his fellows. Therefore, it's not surprising that our drinking careers have been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove that we drink like other people. The idea that somehow, someday, he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. Many pursue it into the gates of insanity or death. Now we learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we're like other people or presently may be has to be smashed. Now, be

Four words, one meaning: obsession, illusion, delusion, insanity

04:42

Charlie 04:42

careful. In these two paragraphs that Joe just read, he has used four different words that all mean the same thing. And if you catch him at it, you know what he's doing. If you don't, you'll think he's talking about something else. He said, The idea that someday, somehow, someday he

will control and enjoy his drinking is a great obsession of every abnormal drinker. Now, we know an obsession. It's an idea that is so strong, it can make you believe something that's true. It can make you believe a lie. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing. We know what an illusionist is. An illusionist is a magician, and they can stand in front of you, and with sleight of hand and a few props, they can make you believe something that's not true. So, illusion also means to believe something that's not true, or to believe a lie. Many pursuit into the gates of insanity or death. Insanity is to believe something that's not true. The next paragraph he said, The delusion that we are luck other people are present in maybe has to be smashed. Delusion means the same thing. If you've deluded yourself, it means you've come to believe something that's not true. So you may see him using any one of four terms: obsession, illusion, delusion, or insanity. All four mean exactly the same thing: to believe something that is not true or to believe a lie. Let's go over to page 32, second paragraph. Let's look at the lie the man of 30 believed.

The man of 30: 25 years dry, dead in four

06:23

Joe 06:23

Said a man of 30 was doing a great deal of spree drinking. He was very nervous in the mornings after these bouts and quiet himself with more liquor. He was ambitious to succeed in business, but saw that he would get nowhere if he drank at all. Once he started, he had no control whatever. He made up his mind that until he had been successful in business and retired, he would not touch another drop. An exceptional man, he remained bone-dry for 25 years and retired at the age of 55 after a successful and happy business career. Then he fell victim to the belief which practically every alcoholic has that his long period of sobriety and self-discipline had qualified him to drink as other men. Out came his carpet slippers and a bottle. In two months, he was in a hospital, puzzled and humiliated. Now he tried to regulate his drinking for a while, making several trips to the hospital meantime. Then, gathering all his forces, he attempted to stop altogether and found that he could not. Every means of solving his problem, which money could buy, was at his disposal. Every attempt failed. Though a robust man in retirement, he went to pieces quickly and was dead within four years. Now, this case contains a powerful lesson. Most of us have believed that if we remain sober for a long stretch, we could thereafter drink normally. But here is a man who, at 55 years, found where he has just left off at 30. We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. Convincing to drink after a period of sobriety, we're in a short time as bad as ever. Now, if we're planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we'll be immune to alcohol.

Charlie 07:57

Now, we know the truth to be this. Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. We've never seen one single case where one of us was able to go back to successful drinking. Now, to believe anything different than that is to believe something that is not true or to believe a lie. This guy believed that after 25 years of sobriety, he could now drink like normal people. Now, based upon that belief, he took a drink, triggered the allergy, couldn't stop. Four years later, he's dead. Now, as his real problem, though, the fact that he has a physical allergy to alcohol or a form of insanity that tells him it's okay to drink alcohol after 25 years of sobriety. The real problem centers in our mind, telling us we can drink rather than in our body that ensures that we can't drink. Let's go to page 34, second paragraph. For those who are unable to drink moderately, the question is how to stop altogether. We are assuming, of course, that the reader desires to stop. Whether such a person could quit upon a non-spiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not. Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever, yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it: this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish. How then should we help our readers determine to their own satisfaction whether they are one of us? The experiment of quitting for a period of time will be helpful, but we think we can render an even greater service to alcoholic sufferers and perhaps to the medical fraternity. So we shall describe some of the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking. For obviously, this is the crux of the problem. What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time the desperate experiment of the first drink? Friends who have reasoned with him after a spree, which has brought him to the point of divorce or bankruptcy are mystified when he walks directly into a saloon. Why does he? Of what is he thinking? Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. Now, we're going to look in old Jim's mind just before he gets drunk. And we're going to see whether he is sane or insane.

Jim the car salesman: a sane day, an insane thought

10:28

Joe 10:28

Joe loves Jim. Yeah, I love old Jim. I identify with Jim. Our first example is a friend we shall call Jim. This man has a charming wife and family. He inherited a lucrative automobile agency. He had a commendable war, war record. He's a good salesman. Everybody likes him. Typical alcoholic is me. He's an intelligent man than normal, so far as we can see, except for a nervous

disposition. Now, he did no drinking until he was 35. In a few years, he became so violent when intoxicated, he had to be committed. On leaving the asylum, he came into contact with us. Now, we told him what we knew of alcoholism.

Charlie 11:08

They told him about step one: the physical allergy, the obsession of the mind, the powerless condition. And the answer we had found. They told him about step two: the power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. He made a beginning. A little later on, the book says step three is just a beginning. So apparently, Jim took steps one, two, and three, and immediately things started to get better for him.

Joe 11:31

His family was reassembled, and he began to work as a salesman for a business he'd lost through drinking, and all went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.

Charlie 11:39

The book's going to tell us the only way we enlarge on step three is 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, and Jim didn't do any of those. 1,

Joe 11:48

2, and 3. To his consternation, he found himself drunk a half a dozen times in rapid succession. Now, on each of these occasions, we worked with him, reviewing carefully what had happened.

Charlie 11:58

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

Joe 12:14

members. He agreed he was a real alcoholic and in serious condition. Now, he knew he faced another trip to the asylum if he kept on. Moreover, he would lose his family from whom he had deep affection. Yet he got drunk again, and we asked him to tell us exactly what happened. They're getting a little tired of Jim now.

Charlie 12:32

They said, My God, Jim, this is seven times in a row. Let's don't go through this anymore. You sit down here and you tell us exactly how this has happened.

Joe 12:44

On page 36, we're going to see where Jim was sane, and then we're going to see where he went insane. Well, this is his story. I came to work on Tuesday morning,

Charlie 12:53

and we read this book for years before we saw this. I came to work on Tuesday morning. Where was he all day Monday? Well, we're bad about

Joe 13:08

Mondays. We're bad about Mondays. Now he said, I remember I felt irritated that I had to be a salesman for concern I once don't. Now, I

Charlie 13:17

don't think that's insanity. That's probably normal thinking. I think any of us that had to be a salesman for a concern we once owned would probably be a little irritated by that fact, too. That's normal, sane thinking. He said, I had a few words with the boss, but nothing serious. The boss probably said, Say, Jim, by the way, where were you all day yesterday anyhow? Nothing serious, just enough to irritate him.

Joe 13:40

He's a little restless and a little irritable and a little discontented. He said, Then I decided to drive into the country and see one of my prospects for a car.

Charlie 13:48

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

Joe 14:03

So, on the way, I felt hungry, so I stopped at a roadside place where they have a bar. I had no intention of drinking, I just thought I'd get a sandwich.

Charlie 14:10

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

Joe 14:28

I also had the notion I might find a customer for a bar at this place, which was familiar. I've been going to it for years. I'd eaten there many times during the months I was sold.

Charlie 14:36

We're not going in there to drink. We've eaten there many times during the months we're sober. We're going to go in there and get a sandwich and maybe sell a car while we're in there. Normal, same thinking for an alcoholic car salesman. He said, I sat down at a table and ordered a sandwich and a glass of milk. Still, no thought of drinking. What's more normal than to sit down at a table, order a sandwich, and a glass of milk? Normal, same thinking for an alcoholic car salesman.

Joe 15:02

So I ordered another sandwich and decided to have another glass of

Charlie 15:04

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

Whiskey in the milk: plain insanity

15:27

Joe 15:27

italic. He said, suddenly. Suddenly. That means right now. Suddenly. The thought crossed my mind that if I ever put an ounce of whiskey in the milk, it couldn't be on a full stomach.

Charlie 15:36

This is absolute insanity, isn't it? For this guy to believe that he can take whiskey, mix it with milk, and take it on a full stomach, and it won't hurt him. Now, based on the insane idea, he makes a decision and

Joe 15:49

takes some action. He said, I order whiskey and poured it into the milk. And I vaguely sensed I was not being any too smart. But felt reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach.

Charlie 16:00

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

Joe 16:07

The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into the milk. That didn't seem to bother me, so I tried another. Can you imagine how he's going to feel with whiskey in the milk back and forth? What a hangover, he's going to have. Thus started one

more journey to the asylum for Jim. Here was a threat of commitment, the loss of family and position, to say nothing of that intense mental and physical suffering which drinking always caused him. Now, he had much knowledge about himself as an alcoholic. Yet all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside in the favor of the foolish idea that he could take whiskey if only he mixed it with milk. Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this plain insanity. How can such a lack of a portion of the ability to think straight be called anything else? If you were looking for a definition of insanity, that would be it right there. The lack of a portion of the ability to think straight to be called anything else.

The jaywalker: absurd and incomprehensible conduct

17:02

Charlie 17:02

Now, is Jim's real problem the fact that he has a physical allergy to alcohol? He has a form of insanity that tells him it's okay to drink alcohol mixed with milk on a full stomach. The real problem centers in the mind telling us we can drink, rather than the body that ensures that we can't. Page 37, last paragraph. Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jaywalking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. Now, I don't understand this guy at all. But I can see him out here on the interstate waiting for a truck or a bus to come down through there. Jumps out in front of it, spins around two or three times. Sees how close it can come to hitting him without actually hitting him. For some reason, he gets a thrill out of it. Don't understand him, but I can see him doing it. He enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. People say, Hey, Bill, you better quit doing that. You're going to get yourself hurt. Up to this point, you would label him as a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him, and he's slightly injured several times in succession. He's getting a little older now. He can't move as fast. They begin to hit him once in a while. Nothing serious. He just kind of bounces off of him. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. But presently, he's hit again, this time as a fractured skull. Now, he got hurt bad this time. Within a week after leaving the hospital, a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He gets hurt bad again. Now he sings our national anthem. He tells you he's decided to stop jaywalking for good. He said, Man, I'll never do that again as long as I live. But in a few weeks, he breaks both legs. On through the years, this conduct continues, accompanied by his continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, he can no longer work. He's just so beat up now. He can't hold a job. His wife gets a divorce. She started supporting him and the kids and the hospital bills. And he's held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jaywalking idea out of his head, not his body, his head. He shuts himself up in a treatment center, hoping to mend his ways. But

today he comes out, he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he? Now, you may think her illustration is too ridiculous, but is it? We who have been through the ringer have to admit, if we substituted alcoholism for jaywalking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However, intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we've been strangely insane. Strong language, but isn't it true? Oh, I think that's so appropriate today. You know, once again, because of education, many, many people are getting to us before they have to lose everything. Occasionally, you see somebody come in here that's still married. Once in a while they come in and they've got a job. Believe it or not, I saw one come in about a month ago and he still had an automobile. And we start talking to those people about insanity. They say, Man, don't tell me I'm crazy. I haven't lost anything. I've got my job. I've got my blah blah blah. No, we're not talking about that at all. We're talking about one thing and one thing only. Can we or can we not see the truth about alcohol? If we can, we're sane. If we can't, we're insane. Now, the low-bottom drunk like Jim. Probably easier for him to see his insanity because he lost everything that he had, period. A high-bottom drunk who hasn't lost a lot of stuff, sometimes it's a little more difficult for them to see it. But I'll tell you, whether you're low bottom or high bottom, if you get drunk, you're going to get drunk the same way, believing something that is not true. Let's go to page whatever the next one is, 39. 39. My old page is so tore up, I can't read it anymore. And we're going to look at a guy named Fred. Now, Fred is the opposite of Jim. Fred is high bottom. Fred never lost anything. Jim didn't feel too good the day he got drunk. Fred is on top of the world the day he gets drunk. Yet he got drunk the same way he believed a lie. Let's look at Fred's lie.

Fred: the high-bottom drunk who lost nothing

21:48

Joe 21:48

Page 39 said: Fred is a partner in a well-known accounting firm. His income is good. He has a fine home. He's happily married and, father of promising children of college age. Now, he has so attractive a personality that he makes friends with everyone. If ever there was a successful businessman, it is Fred. Now, to all appearance, he is a stable, well-balanced individual, yet he's alcoholic. Now, we first saw Fred about a year ago in a hospital where he'd gone to recover from a bad case of the jitters. It was his first experience of this kind, and he was much ashamed of it. Far from admitting he was an alcoholic, he told himself he'd come to the hospital to rest his nerves.

Charlie 22:25

We see lots of nerve restors in AA today, just like old Fred is.

Joe 22:29

The doctor intimated strongly that he might be worse than he realized. For a few days, he was depressed about his condition. Now, he made up his mind to quit drinking altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could do so in spite of his character and standing. Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic. He would not take step one. Much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problems. If you can't take one, you can't take two. We told him what we knew of alcoholism.

Charlie 22:55

They told him about step one and step two. And he was interested and could see that he had some of

Joe 23:00

the symptoms. He said, I'm a little bit alcoholic. Borderline case. He was a long way from admitting he could do nothing about himself. He was positive that his humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it. Now, we heard no more of Fred for a while. One day we were told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see us. The story he told us is most instructive, for here was a chap absolutely convinced he had to stop drinking, who had no excuse for drinking, who exhibited splendid judgment and determination in all his other concerns, yet was flat on his back, nevertheless. Well, let him tell you about it. He said, I was much impressed with what you fellows said about alcoholism, and I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again. And I rather appreciated your ideas about that subtle insanity which precedes the first strength. But I was confident it could not happen to me after what I'd learned. I reasoned I was not so far advanced as most of you fellas, that I'd been usually successful in licking my other personal problems, and that I would therefore be successful where you men failed. I felt I had every right to be self-confident. It would be only a matter of exercising my willpower and keeping on guard. Now, this frame of mind, I went about my business, and for a time, all was well. I had no trouble refusing drinks and began to wonder if I had not been making too hard a work of a simple matter. We think Fred began to get drunk right here.

Charlie 24:23

He began to say, Now, this staying sober is easy,

Joe 24:26

nothing to this. One day I went to Washington to present some account I've been out of town during this particular dry spell, so there's nothing new about that. Physically, I felt fine. Neither

did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business came off well. I was pleased and knew my partners would be too. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon. Everything's on top of the world for old Fred. He's doing great, making lots of money, family happy, business associates happy. Everything's good in Fred's life.

Charlie 24:56

He said, I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind: it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails and go back to the hospital. Now that's the truth, isn't it? No way could he drink on the truth. His mind said it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all, nothing more. Now based on the insane idea, he makes a decision, takes some action. I ordered a cocktail in my meal, then I ordered another cocktail. Now, we got it inside ourselves now. The allergy takes over. After dinner, I decide to take a walk. When I'd returned to the hotel, it struck me a high ball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and plenty next morning. I have a shadowy recollection of being in an airplane bound for New York and of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field instead of my wife. The driver escorted me about for several days. I know little of where I went or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical suffering. As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all. I'd commenced a drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale. Now is Fred's real problem the fact that he has a physical allergy to alcohol, or that he has a form of insanity that tells him it's okay to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. The real problem centers in the mind, telling us we can drink rather than the body that ensures we can't. Page 43, last paragraph.

"Once more": no mental defense, the need for a Higher Power

26:59

Joe 26:59

You know, Bill had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it, and Roland had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it. Fred had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it. Bill is trying to show us through here, they all have the obsession of the mind. And he's trying to show us through the illustrations of Man of Thirty, Jim, Jay Walker, and Fred to tell us one thing. And the last paragraph says once more. So he just went through all this to say once more: the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a higher power. And that is the solution. So you can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind. Self-

knowledge won't get it. The more we try to think our way out of it, the deeper into it we get. We must come from a higher power. Our defense must come from a higher

Charlie on hellfire religion and arriving in AA at 38

27:52

Charlie 27:52

power. And you notice he did say the practicing alcoholic or the drinking alcoholic. He just said the alcoholic. Now, what that means to me today is that I have no effective mental defense against the first drink, left on my own resources. Invariably, I'm going to go right back to drinking again without the aid of a power greater than human power. Now, if you're the kind of alcoholic that I am, and if you were raised in the church setting that I was raised in, by the end of chapter three, you are now faced with one hell of a dilemma. Because he's convinced me in chapter 3: without the aid of a power greater than I am, I'm going back to drinking. But I also felt that even though that was true, it wouldn't be possible for me to get the aid of a power greater than I am. Because you see, like Joe, I was raised in a good old Southern Baptist church. Now, I've got nothing against the good old Southern Baptist Church. It's a great church. But when I was a kid growing up, I'm sure that from time to time they talked about a kind and a loving God. But if they did, the message never got to the pew I sat in. Because all I ever remember hearing about God when I was growing up in church was hell, fire, and brimstone, and going to hell for lying and cheating and stealing and drinking whiskey and committing adultery. By the time I got to AA, I'd been doing that for about 20-some-odd years. And I know that God had already told St. Peter, when that little four-eyed sucker gets up here, send them downstairs, we'll not need his kind. And I knew that if God had anything to do with me, it wouldn't be anything good. It would certainly be something bad. I remember so clearly when I separated from God. In that Baptist church I grew up in, they gave me the rules. They said, if you do this, this, and this, you'll be okay. If you do that, that, and that, you're going to hell just sure as anything. Now, I didn't have any trouble with their rules at all until I got to be about 12 or 13 years old. And one day it seemed to me that the preacher looked me straight in the eye and he said, Son, to think about doing it is just as bad as doing it. And I said, oh

Joe 30:33

shit.

Charlie 30:36

I've had it now because I'd been thinking about doing it for a long time. In fact, I'd been thinking about doing it long enough, I was starting to get brain damage from it. And I said, if you're going to hell for thinking about it, then you might as well just go ahead and do it. And I

did. And I didn't go to hell immediately. And I said, That sucker has been lying to me all along. I said, He and my parents and my teachers have formed together in a conspiracy to keep me from having any fun. And I said, from this day on, I do not attend to pay any attention to what they have to say. I don't have any intention of following God's rules, their rules, or anybody else's rules. From this day on, I'm going to do it my way. And I'm going to do it whenever I want to, and if they don't like it, to hell with them. Now, when I got to AA, I had that attitude of a 12-year-old boy who had defied God, his parents, and his teachers. And I first walked into AA, I was 38 years old, with the spiritual knowledge of God of that 12-year-old boy. No wonder we have trouble with this God thing when we get to AA. Anybody else ever have those kind of feelings about God and people? And I think Bill recognized that. And I think he said, sooner or later, I'm going to have to ask these people to make a decision about God. And I think he said in his mind that they're not going to be able to make that decision based upon old ideas. And that's what I had when I got here: old ideas. And I think he said, I believe I need to give them some new information about God where they might be able to discard some old ideas, pick up some new ideas, and then they'll be able to make a decision about this God thing. And he wrote another chapter called We Agnostics, which I think is one of the greatest pieces of spiritual information I've ever read in my life. As I read that and studied that, I can see where some of my old ideas, old prejudices about God and religion were wrong. And when I could see where they were wrong, then I could discard them and then I could accept some new ideas about God, and then I could make a decision. But based on hellfire and brimstone, based on a God of justice, no way could I have ever made the decision about God.