

We Agnostics

Joe McQ. & Charlie P. · session 5 of 9

Casting aside old ideas, emotions, and attitudes about God

00:00

Charlie 00:00

Thank God for chapter 4. Let's look at just a little bit of it just before we go to lunch.

Joe 00:05

You know, Dr. Jung told Roland that ideas, emotions, and attitudes—that's what we're going to be looking at now: ideas, emotions, and attitudes, which are the guiding force of the lives of these people are suddenly cast to one side. And certainly the ideas, the emotions, and attitudes that I had toward God were that of a seven or eight-year-old boy. I couldn't accept it then, I couldn't accept it later, and I couldn't accept it when I got here, and I can't accept it today because I need new ideas and emotions and attitudes about this, new information, is what I'm trying to say. This chapter, we agnostic. Just the word agnostic means something to me. Gnostic means knowledge. You put the ag in front of it, means without. Those are us who are without knowledge. And that was me. And the knowledge that I did have was not good. And Bill had the same experiences that we did when. When Ebby presented him with a solution, he was aghast at that solution. Some of us are aghast at that solution, also. And Bill said that when they talked to me of a God personal to me, he said, My mind became irritated and snapped shut against those theories. And certainly, that's the way that I did. Later on in the book, it says to us that when the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically, the spiritual malady, the understanding, a God of my understanding. When that is straightened out, we'll straighten out mentally and physically. And this chapter here, we agnostic is an attempt to do that. And as Father Bill Wilson, some of you know, Father Bill, said to us many, many times, and I love it. He said that this chapter is not put here to teach me that there's any particular type of religion or type of God. He said this chapter is simply put here so that I might read and question and wonder and get some ideas, emotions, and attitudes to new ones and open up my mind to a point that God might prove to me there's a God. Now, with that understanding of this chapter, it means more sense, makes more sense to me and becomes extremely valuable in my life.

The two questions and the 44-question lists (Wino Joe)

02:02

Charlie 02:02

In the preceding chapters, you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we've made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you can find that you cannot quit entirely,

Joe 02:15

because of the obsession.

Charlie 02:17

Or if, when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. God, isn't that simple? Isn't that simple? You see how people like to expand on things? They took the two questions out of the big book, and some years later, they made a little pamphlet that had 10 questions in it. That wasn't enough. They made another one that had 20 questions in it. Hell, I think we're up to 44 today, aren't we? Thank God, Bill, or Abby, didn't have the 44 questions with him when he walked into Bill's kitchen. He'd have said, Bill, has alcohol been bothering your reputation? Hadn't had a reputation in years. Then he would have said, Bill, has alcohol been interfering with your sex life? Is anything like I was? He

Joe 03:05

hadn't had any of that in a long time either. There's a statement in the forty-four question that says, Do you drink alone? Well, think about it. If I'm buying yes, and if you're buying

Atheist, agnostic, or true believer — and lack of power as our dilemma

03:14

Charlie 03:14

milk, we had an old friend that used to live in Tyler, Texas. His name was Wino Joe. I've always felt sorry for everybody in AA that didn't get to meet Wino Joe. He was a real character. He's dead now. But Wino Joe had made up his own list to ask yourself to see if you're alcoholic. And the first question on his list was: Has the roof of your mouth ever been sunburned while drinking? He said, if it has, you're probably an alcoholic. I think the second question was: have you ever been arrested for drunk driving from the back seat of somebody else's car. The third one I loved was: Have you ever been arrested for public drunk while in jail? He had a real list of them. We only need these two. I use them all the time. People come to me today and they say, Charlie, you think I might be an alcoholic? I say, I have no idea. Let me ask you a couple questions. Have you been able to quit drinking entirely, left on your own resources? If they're a real alcoholic, they've got to say no. And then I say, Do you have any control over the amount

you take after you've once started drinking? If they're real alcoholic, they've got to say no. And then I say, well, you're probably an alcoholic. That's about as simple as you can make it. Now, if that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer. You know, we are very unique people. We number amongst a few people in the world today who suffer from a twofold illness that can only be overcome by a spiritual experience. We also number amongst a few people in the world today who have a terminal illness that we can come out of it in better shape than we were when we went into it, if we can have this spiritual experience. We are unique people. Now, to one who feels he's an atheist or agnostic, such an experience seems impossible. But to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he's an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death, step one, or to live on a spiritual basis, step two, are not always easy alternatives to face, but it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first, some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope, we were not true alcoholics. But after a while, we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life, or else. Perhaps it's going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics, and our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted. And I had to stop right here and and and see see wh what is my belief as far as this God thing is concerned. And today we find there's only one of three ways that you can believe as far as God's concerned. One way is to be an atheist. Now, an atheist says there is no God. Therefore, they have no power greater than human power to turn to. The atheists would have to stand on their own two feet, run their own show. And I said, Charlie, are you an atheist? I said, No. I've always believed in some kind of God, so I'm not an atheist. I said, Well, then maybe you're an agnostic. So I had to go to the dictionary and look that word up. And like Joe said, the word agnostic means without knowledge. An agnostic believes that there is a God. But since we've never tried to use God's power in our life, we've run our own show, stood on our own two feet, we've never received God's power, so we don't know that God exists. We believe in some kind of God, but we don't really know whether that's true or not. And I think that's what most of us are when we get here. Most of us get here with some belief in a God, but we have never turned to that God, and we've been running our own show and standing on our own two feet and doing our own thing. Even though we believed in God, we acted as if we did not believe in them. An agnostic is one without knowledge of God, just belief. Now, if you're an atheist or an agnostic, then the question becomes: how do you become a true believer in God? A true believer is one that knows that God exists, don't believe it, knows it. A true believer is one who has experienced God's power in their life. And God has given them whatever they need to have a successful life. I don't think any of us get here as a true believer. Because if we knew God and experienced God's power, then we wouldn't have to come to AA to solve our problem. Most of us come here

as agnostics. Now, whether we be atheist or agnostic, the question becomes. do How you get from that stage to the stage of one who is a true believer and can receive God's power in our life? Page 45, first paragraph. Lack of power, that was our dilemma. You know, if we wasn't powerless, we wouldn't be here, would we? Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a power greater than ourselves, obviously. But where and how were we to find this power? Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find the power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. It doesn't say which will enable you to solve it or which helped you solve it. It says the main object is to enable you to find a power greater than yourself, and then that power will solve the problem. And I find interestingly enough from page 45 on in the big book Alcoholics Anonymous, we don't talk about alcohol anymore. We're through with that. We talk about one thing and one thing only. If you are powerless, whether you be atheist or agnostic, if you are powerless. How do you find the power? And if you can find the power, then the power will solve

Our own conception of God is enough; George and writing it down

10:12

Joe 10:12

the problem. Okay, we're going to go to page 46 in the chapter we agnostics. And the book says that, yes, we have agnostic temperament and have had these thoughts and experiences. Let us make haste to reassure you. We found as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that power, which is God. Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however, inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and affect the contact with Him. You know, my sponsor at that time, George, saw that I had a real problem with this idea about God and he asked me about it, and I said, Yes, I am. I'm having a hard time trying to understand. And he said, Well, I've noticed that. He said, Why don't you do something that helped him and maybe it would help me? He said, Why don't you go home tonight and write down on a piece of paper, what you would like God to be, laying aside all that stuff you think that you know, and just write down on the piece of paper what you would like God to be. And so I went home that night and I wrote down some things, and I'm not going to tell you what it is, up to you. And I wrote down some things I wanted God to be, and I showed them to George, and he looked at them and he said, Well, that's good, Joe. So you can begin with that. See, I didn't know you could do that. And down in the south, you go to hell for making up your own God. True. You had to believe as they believed. You had to have faith in

what they hadn't. If you didn't, you were going to go to hell. But George gave me permission, and I needed that permission to sit down and to say, I would like God to be these things. And he said, That's good. You can start with that, and you can begin with that. And so that's exactly what I did.

Casting aside the old idea, replacing it with a new one

12:01

Charlie 12:01

Where it says much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however, inadequate was sufficient to make the approach and effect a contact with Him. Now, here's where we can cast aside the first old idea. The old idea that I had was that you had to believe as they believed. And they had me convinced that if you didn't believe as they believe, there's no way that you're going to get anything good when it comes to God. So I was real pleased to find out that I can cast aside that old idea and then I can have my own conception of God. And like we said yesterday or last night, I find that I have never had any problem with my own conception of anything. And you let me start believing in God the way I want to, then I've got an entirely different idea. An old idea cast aside, replaced with a new idea begins right

Joe 13:00

here. And the book says: as soon as we admitted the possible existence of a creative intelligence, a spirit of the universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard a turn for those who seek Him. To us, the realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all-inclusive, never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men. See, all I had to quit doing was saying, no, there's not, no, and start seeking, start saying yes, maybe. And I started seeking. I said, George, you mean I need to find God? And he said, George, God's not lost. Didn't take me long to figure out who was lost, but I mean, he said, it's just like the book says it's in the seeking, it's not in the finding. All I had to do was seek. You know, and that's all this book is asking me to do. And this chapter is asking me to seek with an open mind and to wonder and to think, and eventually God will disclose Himself to me. And that's exactly what's

Charlie 14:03

happened. I was told as a kid growing up that the way to God was a very narrow path, that if you strayed off either side of it, you were going to get in a hell of a shape. I was taught that God was very, very exclusive, that only those that believed as they believed would be able to make

any contact with God. Those were old ideas. Now, my book says, We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the realm of the Spirit is broad, roomy, all-inclusive, never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. Old ideas cast aside, replaced with some new ideas, beginning to find this power greater than human power by changing of the old ideas to new ideas. Page 47.

Joe 14:56

So, when therefore we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies too to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.

Charlie 15:13

Prejudice is nothing more than old ideas. Do not let any old ideas you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you.

Joe 15:23

See, that's the start. This is all that we needed to commence spiritual growth, to affect our first conscious relationship with God as we understood Him. And then afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. But that was growth, but if we wished to grow, we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was. And that was a beginning for me. I needed a beginning place, and that's where I started. Now, we need to ask ourselves one short question: Do I now believe? The agnostic has always believed in some kind of God. Or am I even willing to believe?

Charlie 15:59

The atheist can become willing to believe that

Joe 16:02

there's some kind of God. That there's a power greater than myself. And as soon as a man can say that he does believe or is willing to believe, we in fact assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone, a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. And again, the activists, please be sure to read Appendix 2 on spiritual experiences. Again, they want to make real sure that we understand what they mean by those terms.

Belief versus faith — the mechanic named John

16:31

Charlie 16:31

He said it's been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built. Asterisk, bottom of the page, referring to the spiritual experience. So the wonderfully fit, wonderfully effective spiritual structure we're building is the spiritual experience or the spiritual awakening. And he said the cornerstone of that is to believe or to be willing to believe that there's a power greater than human power. We referred to that once before. The foundation of that structure was step one, which is willingness. Now then he tells us the cornerstone of that structure, step two, believing. So we've already put two stones in place. If we can say we're willing and yes, we believe, or we are willing to believe either one of the two. And he said that was great news for us, for we had assumed we could not make use of spiritual principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe. And there has always been one of my great problems with this God thing. Faith indicates surety, faith indicates knowledge. Faith indicates after-the-fact information. And one of my problems has always been: the minister would say, Son, all you've got to do is have faith and everything will be all right. Well, I never could have faith because I had no knowledge of God. I didn't know for sure that God would do anything for me. The best I can possibly do is to start with belief. And there's a big difference between belief and faith, believe me, there is. A good example of that, let's say I moved into this area here, and three or four months later I've got a problem with my automobile. I don't know a good mechanic anywhere in this area. But we'll say that you've lived here for a long time, and I assume you'll know somebody, so I come to you and I say, Can you recommend a good mechanic for me? And you say, Why, sure. Take your car over there to John. He'll do you a good job, and he'll charge you a reasonable price. Well, I don't know whether that's true or not. The best I can do with that information is if I believe it's strong enough, I'll take my car over there to John. And sure enough, he does a good job. He charges me a reasonable price. When I leave there, I know that he will do that. When I went there, I believed that he would do that. Now, six months from now, I have trouble with my car again. I don't ask you or anybody else where to take it. I take it right back to John. This time I took it on faith, took it on knowledge. You can't start with faith, you can only start with belief. And that's all we have to do. We either have to believe, or we become willing to believe, that there's a power greater than we are, and we're on the road to spiritual recovery. We don't have to know anything. Thank God, step two says we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Didn't say we came to know, didn't say we had faith in that, we just came to believe. And I came to believe based upon what I've read in the book and what you told me: that there's a power greater than I am, can restore me to sanity. I didn't know that, I just believed that. Now, if I know that the beginning of this thing, the finding of the power is just to believe or be willing to believe, then the next thing I'm going to have to know is what

procedure am I going to follow in order to find that power? Let's go over to page 51 for just a moment.

Material progress, fixed ideas, and the need for an open mind

20:33

Joe 20:33

First paragraph. It says: This world of ours has made more material progress in the last century than all the millenniums which went before. Almost everyone knows the reasons. Students of ancient history tell us that the intellect of men in those days was equal to the best of today. Yet in ancient times, material progress was painfully slow. The spirit of modern scientific inquiry, research, and invention was almost unknown. In the realm of the material, men's minds were fettered by superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas. And I used to wonder why it is that we today have cellular phones and TVs and automobiles and airplanes, and why those people 100 years or 200 years ago or 500 years ago didn't have or admit those things. I thought we were just smarter than they were. But come to find out they had the same intellect that we did. Intellect means the capacity to learn. They had the same capacity to learn as we do. But the only one thing that kept them in those dark ages, so to speak, it was superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas. That's why I say I need an open mind more today than I ever needed an open mind. And I think we as a society have done that. Right here in the northeast corner of the United States, some 225 years ago or so, people came over here for religious freedom. They wanted to practice a religion as they saw, as they understood it. And as long as you agreed basically with their religion and you practice your religion, somewhat like they did, you were okay. But if you had any thoughts or ideas that were different, and you expressed those thoughts and ideas openly, and it didn't agree with what they had and what they agreed with, they would burn you at the stake as a witch. Right here in America, they did that. So, if you had any ideas like that, you certainly didn't express them, you kept them to yourself. So, superstition, tradition, and all sorts of fixed ideas kept people from growing. And I think we as a country has gotten over that today. Our minds are open to many, many things.

Columbus and the formula: willingness, belief, decision, action

22:27

Charlie 22:27

He said some of the contemporaries of Columbus thought a round earth preposterous. I think Columbus is one of the greatest examples of what you can do based upon belief if you're willing to change your belief. Some 500 years ago, most of what they called the civilized world was situated around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, the western shores of Europe. They had

found a place called the East Indies. And in the East Indies, you could get gold, silk, and spices, lots of goody-goodies. But it took literally years to get to the East Indies. So they were trying to find a new trade route to the East Indies. And somebody said, Is there any possibility that we could sail a ship there? And they said, Well, no, dummy. Don't you know you can only sail to the northeast end of the Mediterranean Sea? And then you have to go by land, camelback, horseback, footback, however they traveled. And that trick took literally years to do. And they said, well, what would happen if we sailed in the other direction? And they said, well, idiot, don't you know if you sail out there, you're going to sail off the edge of this sucker? You see, everybody in those days thought the world was flat. And they assumed if you sailed out there, you would sail off the edge of it. Now, I don't know why they believed that. I assume some people sailed out there, didn't come back, and they thought they had sailed off the edge of it. Joe said the other day: wouldn't it be great if the world was flat? We could take all this environmental junk and just take it out there and go and push her overboard and be done with it. Now, here comes Columbus. And we believe Columbus had to be an alcoholic. Because if you're going to believe differently than the world and everybody in it, and you're going to stand there and express that belief, you're going to have to be tougher than hell to do it. Because many times, if you express a belief different than whatever everybody else believes, they would burn you at the stake or hang you from a tree or cut your head off or something. And Columbus was tough enough and bullheaded enough to be able to stand there. And he said, I believe that the world is round. I do not believe it's flat. Then he made one of the most drunk statements the world has ever heard. He said, I believe we can get east by sailing west. Now, if I didn't drunk thinking, I don't know what is. Many of his mannerisms indicated he's an alcoholic. When he left, he didn't know where he was going. When he got there, he didn't know where he was. When he got back, he didn't even know where he'd been. But what really made him an alcoholic is a woman financed the whole trip for him. She did that twice. Columbus followed a little formula.

Joe 25:32

You want to write down these key words in this formula.

Charlie 25:35

He followed a little formula that the world has always known. That if you want to change anything at all, there are certain things that have to take place. The first thing you have to do in order to change anything, it is to be willing to do so. Circumstances are what make us willing. Trying to find the new trade route to the East Indies is what made him willing to change. The second thing you have to do to change anything is to believe you can do so. You know, he said, I believe that the world is round, it's not flat, I believe you can get east by sailing west. But his

belief didn't do him any good either, because he's still standing on the shore of the ocean the day he expressed that belief. Some days, weeks, months, years later, he did the third thing. He made a decision. He said, By golly, I'm going to go find out whether this thing is round or flat, can you really get east by sailing west? But his decision didn't do me any good either, because he's still standing on the shore of the ocean the day he expressed that decision. Some days, weeks, months, years later, he did the next thing you have to do. He started taking action. And the first thing he did, he went to the King of Portugal to get the money. But the King of Portugal, being a very astute businessman, said, there's no way I'm going to let you have this money because you'll sail out there and sail right off the edge of this sucker and I'll lose it all. That's why he ended up with the Queen of Spain. Sweet talked her out of the money on the promise that he would bring back gold, silk, spices, and the goody-goody of life. She gave him the money. He bought three ships. He put provisions in those three ships. He put crew members in those three ships, and they began to go east by sailing west. Sailing west day after day after day. Now we don't know for sure, but we have a suspicion that on that first trip, he hired a special sailor, put him on the bow of the lead ship at night with a lantern, whispered in his ear, said, I believe this thing is round, but if you see the edge of this damn thing, you holler so we can get turned around in time. Now, after having sailing straight west for several days, they got results. They found land on the other side, which was the result of the action that they had taken. Now we know that he thought it was the East Indies. It wasn't. It was the West Indies. But he had proven to himself the world is not flat, it is round, you will not sail off the edge of it. Turned right around, came right back to Europe, went right back to the Queen of Spain, and she said, Columbus, where's the gold, silk, and spices you promised you would bring me? And he said, Sweetheart, I'm sorry, but I didn't find any. But he said, Tell you what, I'll do. If you'll refinance me, I'll go back. Trust me, honey. Please. This time I'll find it. And she refinanced him. And he got some more ships, more provisions, more crew members. They began to go east by sailing west with one big difference. The second trip, he didn't hire the special sailor, put him on the bow of the lead ship at night. This time he went back on faith. He went back on knowledge. The first time he went back on belief. You can't start with faith. The only thing you can do is start with belief, make the decision, take the action, get the results, and then you'll have faith. Now, I would love to sit here and tell you today. And the decision will do us no good unless we take the action. And that's 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11. As the result of the action, then we will get results too. Having had a spiritual awakening, as the result of these steps, we are now we now have faith, we now have knowledge, we no longer believe. You see, I don't believe today that God will restore me to sanity. I know that He will because He has done so. Now, those of us who have been restored to sanity and we have the faith, then we can go back and help the next newcomer come to believe. They can make a decision, and we can take

them by the hand and walk with them through the action steps, then they will get results, they'll have a spiritual awakening, and then they'll know, and then they can go help the next newcomer come to believe. Now, there's only one thing you and I can't do for the newcomer. We cannot make them willing. That's a job they have to work on themselves. Now, how does an alcoholic become willing to change? Very simple. drinking lots of whiskey. I hear people come to AA and they say, I've been working on step one for three years in AA. And I said, No, you haven't. You don't work on step one in AA. You work on step one out there. And when you've drunk enough of that whiskey, you just can't stand it any longer, then you become willing to change. Then we can begin to help you by helping you come to believe, decide, act, and have a spiritual awakening. Same formula that the world has always used to change the status of anything. Now, if I know I need the power. And if I know the beginning of the finding of the power is just to believe. If I know the procedure to follow to find the power, then I only need to know one more thing. Where am I going to find that power? And I think we get here just as confused about where God is as we were ever confused about anything else. As a kid growing up, somewhere I got a picture in my mind. Now, I don't whether I dreamed it or saw it, but in my mind, when I was thinking about God, he was a tall, elderly gentleman, stood on a cloud up in the sky, long flowing white robes on, long white hair, golden halo around his head, and sun rays shooting out of that halo and a big stick in his right hand. Now, I don't know whether I saw that or whether I dreamed it, but one of the reasons I thought God was there is because every time the minister talked about God, he always pointed up there, so I knew he had to be up there somewhere. But then, what really confused me, I noticed every time the minister wanted to talk to God, he always looked down here. He points up, hell, no wonder we get confused as kids about where God is. And I looked and I looked and I looked and I looked and I never could find God because I never did know where He was. And it took the big book Alcoholics Anonymous to tell me just exactly where I'm going to find him. Page 55.

Where is God? The three wise men and page 55 — God within

32:45

Joe 32:45

You know, many years ago, I was working for, not working, but I was involved in a halfway house in Tulsa and I was heavily involved, and there was this young man there who'd asked me to be his sponsor. And he said, Well, what do you think I ought to do? I said, Well, it'd be probably a good idea if you had a job, you know, to start somewhere here. And he said, Well, easy for you to say, I don't have any car, and I can't get back and forth with no money. Can't even ride the bus. And I said, Well, I'll take you around and help you find a job. And if you find a job, I'll take you back and forth till you can get a couple of paychecks, and then you can buy a

car or do whatever you need to do. He said, Fine. So I'm taking him back and forth to work. And one morning he told me a story that really helped me a lot. And he said, and this is the way the story goes. He said, there were a three wise men of the East, he said, and they took from man, the crown of life, the thing that would make us the happiest, and took it away from him. And they said, Well, now we took it away from him, what are we going to do with it? So, well, one of the guys said, I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll take it to the highest, highest crevice on the face of the earth, and the highest, highest mountain, and we'll hide it up there, and he'll never be able to find it. The other two said, Yeah, but you know how they are. They'll hunt and they'll search and they'll eventually find it. The third one said, I'll tell you what, we'll take it to the deepest, deepest crevice of the deepest ocean and hide it there, and they'll never think about looking for it there. He said, Yeah, but you know how they are. They'll hunt and they'll search and they'll eventually find it. The third one said, I'll tell you what we'll do: we'll hide it within himself, and he'll never think about looking for it there. Page 55, first paragraph. Said, actually, we were fooling ourselves. For deep down in every man, woman, and child is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a power greater than ourselves and miraculous demonstrations of the power in human lives are facts as old as man himself. We finally saw that faith in some kind of a God was a part of our makeup, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend. Sometimes we had to search fearlessly, but he was there. He was as much a fact as we were. We found the great reality deep down within us. And the last analysis is only there that he may be found. It was so with us. So we can only clear the ground a bit. If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself. Then, if you wish, you can join us on the broad highway. Now, with this attitude, you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you. A God of your own understanding is sure to come to you with an open mind.

The inner voice, your own personal God, ready to decide

35:16

Charlie 35:16

It seems as though all human beings are born with some basic knowledge deep down inside themselves, probably lying at a subconscious level. And that basic knowledge seems to be able to tell us what we should do and what we shouldn't do. Seems to be able to tell us how we should live and how we shouldn't live. And I'm sure a lot of people would like to refer to that as just plain old common sense. I think others might want to call it innate intelligence. Some might want to call it the conscience. And others might want to call it the soul. And I don't think it really makes any difference what we call it, as long as we recognize the fact that it's

there. And if you're anything like I am, as far back as I can remember, I've always been aware of that knowledge. There used to be times I would be getting ready to do something, and some voice somewhere from within me would say, Charlie, I don't believe you ought to be doing this. And I wouldn't pay a bit of attention to it. I'd go right ahead and do it, and I'd just get in one hell of a mess. And that same little voice would say, See, I told you not to do it in the first place. Now, if that's true, and if that's God, then what that means to me today, if God dwells within me, then I've got my own personal God. I don't worry anymore about whether he's the God of the Baptist Church or not. I don't worry whether he's the God of the Catholic Church, the Hebrew religion, or anybody else's God. If he dwells within me, then he's my own personal God, and he and I can come together in very simple, very understandable terms. This is one of the greatest pieces of information that I have ever learned is I can have my own God, and He dwells within me, and my knowledge comes from Him, and through Him I'll be able to find that power. Now, then, am I ready to make a decision? You betcha. When he was the God of justice, when he was hellfire and brimstone, I wasn't ready to make that decision. But throughout this chapter, my concept of God has changed entirely, and I'm beginning to believe he just might be a kind and a loving God, and just maybe he'll start doing some good things for me, not hell, fire, and brimstone. And now I'm ready to make a decision. And I don't think it's by accident that the very next chapter is entitled How It Works.