

Steps 5, 6, 7, and 8

Joe McQ. & Charlie P. · session 8 of 9

Page 72: Into Action, not into thinking

00:00

Charlie 00:00

Okay, let's go to page 72. 72 into action. We want to run very briefly now through steps 5, 6, and 7, and then we'll take our break, okay?

Joe 00:17

So we go to page 72: end to action. Now, this is not into thinking, it's into action. He said, Having made our personal inventory, well, what should we do about it? Well, we've been trying to get a new attitude. Remember, Dr. Jung said ideas, emotions, and attitudes were the guiding force of the lives of these people are suddenly cast to one side. We're trying to get a new attitude and a new relationship with our Creator. And our book said back on page 45 that the main object of this book was to enable me to find a power greater than myself, which would solve my problem and to discover the obstacles in my path, and what are some of the obstacles? The resentment, the fear, and the harms done to other people. We've admitted certain defects, and what are these defects? Selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, and inconsiderate attitudes. We've ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is. We've put the finger on our weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when completed, it will mean that we admit it to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our defects. This brings us to the fifth step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.

Wrongs, defects, shortcomings: Bill's interchangeable words

01:29

Charlie 01:29

Now, we know that step five says, we admitted to to God, ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. But if you'll notice here in the narrative, he said the exact nature of our defects. And people used to ask Bill about this, and we've known two ladies that worked with Bill with and for him for years. They both tell us the same thing. People would say, Bill, why did you use the word wrongs in step five, yet in the narrative here in the book, you use

the word defects? And by the way, Bill, what's the difference anyhow? Between a wrong in five, a defect in six, and a shortcoming in seven. And they both said that Bill would just kind of rare back and smile. And he would say, When I took English and writing courses in college, they taught me not to use the same words over and over. Shows how dumb you are. You know, you know, you know. He said there really are no differences in these things. He said, in step four, we find those things that block us off from God. In step five, we're going to talk about them to another human being. In step six, we're going to become willing to turn them loose. In step 7, we're going to ask God to take them away. And He said, You can call them anything you want to: a wrong, a fault, a mistake, a defect, a personality flaw, or whatever. And we're going to notice on the next couple of pages, that's exactly what he does with them. I followed it up in the 12 and 12. 13 years later, not only does he do it there, but he does it twice as bad as he did in the big book. Using these words interchangeably back and forth, all of them meaning identically the same thing.

Step Five: a solitary self-appraisal is insufficient

03:25

Joe 03:25

He said, This is perhaps difficult, especially discussing our defects. There's that word again. He did it again right there. With another person. We think we've done well enough at admitting these things to ourselves. Said, there's doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find that a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We would be more reconciled in discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first. If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. You know, you take these forms now, and the very, very vital information that we've done here. A book says that the solitary self-appraisal is insufficient. I did the very best I could do filling out these forms with the limited knowledge that I had and experience. But I did the best I could do. Now I take these to another human being and discuss them from left to right all the way across. Someone else who's gone on before me who's done the inventory according to the big book. And now that person is going to help me to glean more information out of each of these situations that's going to help me. I need that information because a solitary self-appraisal is insufficient. Give you an example. Looking around this room today and this weekend, I've noticed two or three character defects. There's a couple of them sitting right over there. The one that's sitting right here on the front row, right here. Right there. Several of them, as a matter of fact. It's real easy for me to look at you and see your defects of character. There's nothing between you and me except error. But it's very, very difficult for me to look at me and see the truth and see my defects of character because there's years and a lifetime of

rationalization and justification for these attitudes. And I need another human being to be able to look at me objectively and to help me see things that I couldn't see. Because I'm starting out on a brand new lifetime engagement here, and I need all the information and help that I can get to have a very successful life. And I did the very best I could do in the inventory process, but a solitary self-appraisal is insufficient. I need God and another human being to help me see things that I couldn't see.

The double life and why we take the Fifth to another person

05:40

Charlie 05:40

Now, to be sure, we have no contradictions here over on page 73 on that first paragraph where it says more than most people. Just the sentence before that said, but they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness, and honesty in the sense we find it necessary until they told someone else all their life story. Now, there's the statement that got us confused about step four, and we all began to write our life story thinking that would be step four. But as we can see, ninety five percent of our life story really doesn't have anything to do with our alcoholism. In fact, I was born in 1929, that really doesn't have anything to do with it. But I'll tell you what I have done. If I've taken my inventory the way the book says, I've shared all my life story in those areas that really count. Resentments didn't come in my head just today. They've been popping in my head as far back as I can remember. I've shared all my life story resentment-wise. Fears didn't come just today. They've been coming in my head as far as I can remember. I've shared all my life story, fears-wise. The harms I've done to other people, I didn't hurt them just yesterday. I've been hurting people as far back as I can remember. My mother said to me one time, she said, Charlie, you were the meanest kid I ever saw. She said, I had a little problem loving you myself. When mama doesn't love you, you're pretty bad off. And as I look at these things today, my whole life is centered anyhow around those three things: those resentments, and those fears, and those harms I've done to others. So I don't have any quarrel with that statement at all anymore. If we've done our inventory the way the book says, we've shared our life story. Now, here's why we really need to share this with another human being. More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He's very much the actor. To the outer world, he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it. A practicing alcoholic is trying to live two lives. You know, we've got a conscience. Whenever we're sober, we try to live like people are supposed to live. But when we're drinking, since alcohol lowers the inhibitions, God, we do things that we would never think about doing sober. We're living two lifetimes when we're a practicing alcoholic. The inconsistencies made worse by the things he does on his

sprees. Coming to his senses, he's revolted at certain episodes he vaguely remembers. These memories are a nightmare. He trembles to think someone might have observed him. As fast as he can, he pushes these memories far inside himself. He hopes they will never see the light of day. He is under constant fear and tension, and that makes for more drinking. You know, if us face it, we alcoholics have become the world's greatest con artist. You have to be. You couldn't live as a practicing alcoholic if you didn't learn how to lie, cheat, con, manipulate, steal, whatever's necessary. And I think the one we have to con the most is ourselves. I don't think we could live with ourselves if we had to really see what's going on when we're drinking. But see, we've got a little thing called resentments, and we use those resentments to transfer blame to others, and that way we could live with ourselves. Now, if you've been doing that for 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 40 years, you come to AA, and you take step four, you be just as honest as you can with yourself, but let's face it, we can't be honest with ourselves. I now need to take my inventory, take it to another human being, one who's walked this walk before me, who understands four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine according to the big book, and have them help me see those things I can't see about me. Now they're going to change anything in column one. Not going to change anything in column two. They'll probably change some things in column three. One place I said this was caused by the sex instinct, and he said, No, it isn't. Said, you're just trying to build your self-esteem. That's all you're trying to do. In the fifth column, one place I said, this was caused by fear, and he said, This is plain damn dishonesty. That's all this is. He helped me see things I couldn't see. We're getting ready to start a lifetime-changing process. We need to be sure that we're trying to change the right things so we can have peace of mind in the future, and we just can't see it by ourselves. Now, I know confession is good for the soul, and I know if you belong to a denomination that requires it, you ought to go do that. But I still think you ought to take your inventory to somebody in IA. preferably a good sponsor if you've got one that knows the program. The main thing is, do they really know the program? If they do, they can help us. If they don't, then all we're going to get out of it is confession. We need more than that. Page 74 tells people, tell you how to pick somebody. That is not valid today like it was in 1939. In 1939, the first person out here in California that got this big book didn't have any other AA members or any sponsor, and it was difficult for them to find somebody to do step five with. That's what page 74 deals with. But today, there's plenty of good people out here in California that understands this program, that have worked this program, that have walked this step before. That's who we need to select to take step five with. Hopefully, it'll be our sponsor. Page 75 tells us how to do it.

Joe 11:27

When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. There's that time factor again. We have a written inventory and prepared for a long talk. We explained to our partner what we're about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we're engaged upon a life and death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help. They would be honored by our confidence. I'll never forget when I call my sponsor, Franklin. I said, Franklin, can I come over this weekend and do my inventory, do my fifth step? He said, Sure, I'd love to have you come over. So I went over there to Ollie Branch, Mississippi, and I sat down there with Franklin that evening, and I said, Well, I've got it all prepared here, and you've helped me a lot, and I appreciate it. He said, Yeah, I know you do, and I'm ready to get started. He said, But first of all, that's you and I do the third-step prayer together. That's the kind of sponsor I had, and we'd ask God to be with us during this process. And we did that, and we set about looking into this inventory process. Franklin helped me see things that I couldn't see. I shared these things with him from left to right, all the way across, and he asked me questions and helped me see things that I couldn't see. Shared with me some of the things that happened with him and how he could see things. And it helped me a whole lot. It helped me a lot. And then, after that weekend was over, where the book says we pocketed our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once taking this step withholding nothing, we are delighted. Now we see the results. Some more promises. We can look the world in the eye, we can be alone in perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.

Charlie 13:05

We believed in step two, now we begin to have

Joe 13:07

a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel that we're on the broad highway walking hand in hand with the spirit of the universe. You know, I remember back when I was drinking, how my mind used to race uncontrollably every night. And that's the main reason I drink was to stop it. And after I did this fifth step, and I was on my way home that afternoon, I used to lay awake, and I'd be thinking if I could just get it all even one time, just get it back to zero, back to even, and all those situations, just one time I'd be okay. And by this time, I could see that I could do that. I

was looking forward to the next steps because I wanted to get things squared away one time. And I thank God all the way home for this process up to this point.

The hour's rest; checking the arch (Step Six)

13:51

Charlie 13:51

Now, if you've done four and five, according to the big book, you've done a lot of work. You're probably tired and need a little rest. The book's going to give us a little rest stop. Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour. He didn't say 72 days. You see, they mean for us to get on with this thing. Between three and four at once, now we get an hour's rest here, but that's all. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. We don't know Him yet, but we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf, we turned to the page which contained the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals. Now, he could have said the first five steps again, but he doesn't want to do it twice in a row. Carefully reading the first five proposals, we ask if we've omitted anything for building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones property in place? Have we skimmed on the cement, put in the foundation. Have we tried to make mortar without sand? And once again, we're referring to the wonderfully effective spiritual structure, the personality change we're building. Step one: willingness was the foundation. Step two, believing was the cornerstone. Step three, he told us it's an arch, we'll pass through to freedom, and three was the keystone. Now we put two more stones in place. Step 6. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing, and that's all of step six. And if you'll notice, He didn't say a thing about defects of character, did He? He did say those things that we have admitted are objectionable. Now surely, surely, in step four and five, when we looked out into that fifth column and we saw that old selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, inconsiderate character that we had become. When we saw that those are what caused us to do the things that hurt people, they in turn retaliate, we in turn resent, we're afraid, we're filled with guilt and remorse, causes us to drink, then surely those things in the fifth column have now become objectionable to us. Are we ready to turn them loose? If we are, we're through with step six. The book recognizes, though, that self cannot always overcome self. Because it says if we're not ready, we ask God to help us be willing to turn these things loose. Now, you would think when we see what they do to us, we'd be more than willing. But sometimes we're not. You know, we human beings are funny people. Sometimes we would rather sit in today's pain and suffering because we've kind of learned how to take care of that.

Sometimes we'd rather sit in today's pain and suffering, than take a chance on changing in the future, because we don't know what change will bring. You see, if I have to get rid of my selfishness and become unselfish, then how am I going to get what I want in the future? If I'm going to have to get rid of my dishonesty and start operating honestly, how in the hell am I going to make a living? I don't know nothing about honesty when I get here. If I'm going to have to start getting rid of my self-seeking, frightened character and start operating on courage, that scares the hell out of me. I don't know nothing about that. If I'm going to have to start considering other people and their needs and their wants, then who's going to take care of me? Sometimes we would rather sit in today's pain than take a chance on changing in the future. And the book recognized that and said, if you're not willing, you ask God to help you be willing. And with God's help, we become willing. We're through with six. When ready, we say something like this, my Creator. I'm now willing you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character. whoop, whoop, whoop. We're in step seven now. And it said shortcomings, but here he calls, see what he's done to us? He confused the hell out of us, didn't he? You bet you. I pray you now remove from every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen. We then completed step seven. Are you ready to have God remove them? If you are, you're through with six. Have you humbly asked Him to take them away? If you have, you've done step seven. But I hope you don't make the mistake I do. I assume that now that I'm ready and God being all-powerful, all I've got to do is turn to God and say, Okay, God, here I am, warts and all, zap me and give me the \$29.95 special, and I'll never have to worry about this stuff again. I found out it won't work that way. God will do for me what I can't do for myself. I simply do not have the power to remove a character defect. Only God has that power. God will not do for me what I can do for myself, and what I can do for myself is find out the opposite of that character defect, and then with God's help and all the willpower I can muster in every situation that comes up, try to practice the opposite. Because you see, God can't take away my selfishness and leave another hole in my head. It's going to have to be replaced with the opposite, which is unselfishness. And when I first got here, my mind was a set of mental habits ingrained in 38, 39, 40 years of living. The habitual thing for me was to react selfishly. And the only way you break a habit is to work against yourself. And if I ask God to take away selfishness and I start trying to practice unselfishness. Slowly the old habit dies and a new habit takes its place. And over a period of years, I have become an unselfish human being. I am not what I was when I first got here. If I want God to take away dishonesty, then I must do my part, which is to practice honesty in every situation that comes up, and God, that's hard for me to do. That is so alien to my nature. And I can't practice honesty without God's help, but with God's power, all the willpower I can muster,

I can force myself to be honest, and slowly the old idea dies, and a new one takes its place. The habitual thing for me today is to react to any situation with honesty. If I want God to take away fear, then I've got to kick myself in the butt and practice courage. If I want Him to take away inconsideration, then I must start considering other people and their needs and their wants, and slowly the old idea dies, and a new idea takes its place. The book says, We were reborn. I am not what I used to be. Now I'm not completely unselfish, never will be. I'm not always completely honest. Sometimes I'm afraid, and at other times I'm inconsiderate, but the majority of the time, I'm an unselfish, honest, human being with courage, considering other people first. You know, I think you and I are the luckiest people in the world. We have the opportunity through these two little steps right here to live two lifetimes in one lifetime. Most people out there are sick. Most of them are going to the grave sick, not even knowing they're sick. We not only know we're sick, we know what's wrong with us. We found it in steps four and five, and in six and seven, we can do something about it, and we can change it, and we become entirely different human beings. Most people don't get that opportunity. Now be careful. For God's sake, be careful. Because if you really accept this as the correct thing, the right thing, then that means from this day on, you are responsible for what you are. I can't blame it on Barbara any longer. Can't blame it on mother and dad. I can't blame it on God, and I can't blame it on society. If I stay selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened, and inconsiderate, it's got to be because that's the way I want to be. I'll no longer have the luxury of blaming it on others because I don't have to be that way. And you know what I found out? I found out that when you become unselfish, people start kind of liking you a little better than they did before. I found out when you start becoming honest, well, hell, you feel better about yourself. That's the way you build self-esteem: to do the right thing for a change. I found out when I practice with courage and operate on courage instead of fear, I do things that make me feel better. And I quit doing things that used to make me feel so bad. I found out that there's real pleasure in considering other people first and giving to others before you take for yourself. I didn't know that. How in the hell could I know that? I'd never been that way before. This thing absolutely amazes me in what happens to us and the simplicity of this thing if we'll just do what the book says, Joe.

The paradox: Six and Seven, the tools of change; Saul to Paul

23:59

Joe 23:59

You know, there's always a paradox in AA. To give you an idea of what a paradox is, how many of you have ever ever called your sponsor so you could listen? We always call them so we can talk, right? That's the paradox. And the paradox here and in these two steps is that they use the doctor's opinion in the first four chapters to do step one and two, three and a half pages for step

three, eight pages for step four, four pages for step five, and a whole chapter devoted to working with others. The paradox is that two of the biggest steps in all of Alcoholics Anonymous is on two little paragraphs, six and seven. And these are the tools of change, these are the tools of acceptance. A lot of people talk about just running around accepting things. I accept this, I accept that. Well, I can't do that. Acceptance comes after some actions. Six and seven, the acceptance comes after the actions of 6 and 7. You know, there's a story in another book about this guy named Judas. Judas could not accept what he had done. And what did he do? Killed himself. That's the importance of acceptance. And you can't accept anything unless you take some actions. And he didn't do steps six and seven, didn't have them. And the other story is that there's a story in this other book about this guy. His name was Saul. Saul was on riding his ass on the way to Damascus. Big bolt of lightning came down, knocked him off his ass, on his ass. That's the way I read it. He gets up and he dusted himself off, and this big voice came out of the sky and said, Saul, can we talk? yeah, we can talk. What are you going to talk about? Had to get his attention, didn't he? Maybe alcoholism had to get our attention. And he said, Yeah, Saul, you've been a very selfish individual, and you've harmed a lot of people, and you're very resentful and angry, and you've harmed a lot of people by those attitudes. And he said, I want you to quit doing that. And he said, Well, how do you quit doing that? He said, Well, do these things. And if you'll do that, then you'll make a change. And when you change, then we'll call you Paul. Well, he did those things and became Paul. Now, we know that Paul was one of the greatest writers the world's ever known. And in the Corinthians, the town of Corinthians, they asked Paul one day, said, Paul, what is the secret to living? And he said, the secret to living is daily dying. The old Saul had to die, so the new Paul came alive. You see, six and seven. And by the time I got to six and seven, I could see what I had become as a result of the previous steps, and I didn't like what I had become. And a little doubt creep in my mind: Can God really change me from what I have become to what He intends for me to be? And then I had to reaffirm and rethink about this idea on page 53. It said, God either is or he isn't, he either can or he can't, and what was my choice going to be? And I chose to believe that he could. The tools of change to change from what I had become to that which God intended for me, six and seven. Two of the biggest steps in all of our Call of Synonymous.

The salad-store story: practicing honesty

27:10

Charlie 27:10

Now, just before the break, I want Joe to tell you one little story about buying some salad to show you're practicing this thing.

Joe 27:17

I was hoping he wouldn't do that to me this morning. A few years ago, I went into the grocery store to buy some salad and some stuff to fix for a salad that night was having steak, and I went in there and bought this stuff and came back up to the registry and I was going to pay up. I gave this lady \$10, and she took the \$10 and stood right there and counted me out change for a \$20. And I watched her do it. And I picked up that money and I put it in my pocket and I got out of my car and I sat there and I said, Well, you big dummy. You sold out for ten bucks. I thought it was worth more than that. You know, I'm glad it wasn't less than that. And so I took the money back in there and I told the lady, I said, You know, I'm a member of a fellowship that it requires me to be honest. You gave me too much money, and I want to give you this \$10 back. And she said, You know, I never heard of a fellowship like that. I said, Well, I hadn't until a few years ago. So here's your \$10 back. Well, the whole point of this story, when I walked out of that \$10, now, believe me, I don't need \$10. I mean, I do not need \$10. And I walked out of that store and I felt about that big, sneaking out the door. You see, then I went back in there and gave her that \$10 back, and I walked out and I'm feeling good again. I did the right

Charlie 28:34

thing. And if you practice that enough times, the next time she gives change for 20, you do it right there. You don't even go out the door with it. That's what we're talking about when we change, and only we can do it. Only we can slay ourselves with God's help and become different human beings. So, if you stay, dishonest, self-seeking, frightening, and inconsideration must be because you want to. We've completed our first seven steps, knowing full well we're going to be working on six and seven for the rest of our lives, really, trying to change as the opportunity comes up. Now, we've read in the book where we are spiritually sick, mentally sick, and physically sick. And it says, when the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically. And we begin to look at those things and begin to realize that all human beings really are born to live in three dimensions of life. You know, if God dwells in each of us, we're going to have to live with God whether we like it or not. It's beside the point. The only question is: do we live with him in harmony or disharmony? I don't know of anybody that ever got in more disharmony with God than we alcoholics have. We also have what we call the mental dimension. We've all got a mind. Sometimes we act like we don't, but we do. And we have to live with our mind whether we like it or not. Beside the point, we don't have any choice. And again, do we live there in harmony or disharmony? I don't know of any group of people that ever got more fouled up in their heads than we alcoholics have. For years, I thought the physical dimension was my body only. Today I realize the physical dimension is the world and everything in it, period. Now, we alcoholics don't have any place else to live except here on earth. We don't have any choice in the matter, whether we like it or not, is beside the point. The only question is: do we live on earth with our fellow man in harmony or disharmony? And I

don't know of any group of people that ever got more fouled up in their relationship with the world and everybody in it, and we alcoholics have. So we were sick spiritually, mentally, and physically. The book talks about a design for living. And it looks to us like these steps are designed in such a manner to put us back together and make us well in all three dimensions of life as God intended for us to be in the first place. Step one, two, and three, we got right with the Spirit. Because we were powerless, we saw the need for the power. Step three, we decided to go after that power. And we made a decision that God was going to be the director. That He's the father, we're the children, He's the employer, we're the employee. For most of us, that's the first time we've had that relationship with God for a long, long, long time. We got the right relationship in 1, 2, and 3. That removed just enough self-will to let us begin to look into our own minds. And in step four and five, we found out those things that block us off from God, that block us off from our fellow man, that creates the resentments and the fears and the guilts and etc. And we begin to work on those in step six and seven. We begin to get right in our minds through 4, 5, 6, and 7. Now, that removes just enough self-will to begin to look at our relationship with the world and everybody in it. Now, through 4, 5, 6, and seven, we got rid of these resentments up here. We got rid of these fears up here to the level God intended for them to be. But we really haven't done anything about the storeroom back here that's filled with guilt and remorse associated with the harms we've done in the past. And if we want to get right in the physical dimension, our relationship with the world and everybody in it, it's long been known that the way you do that is to make restitution for the things done in the past. Then the guilt and the remorse begin to disappear. Now, I've never yet seen a newcomer come into a meeting and read the steps off the wall and say that I can hardly wait till we get to steps eight and nine. That looks like a lot of fun. Nobody likes to do steps eight or nine. Nobody that I've ever met. Some people might, but not that I know. The only question is, can we afford not to do that? It looks like if we don't do that, that guilt and remorse in here just kind of keeps chewing at us. And after a while, it begins to bother our relationship with the world and everybody in it. We start getting sick in our head. And after a while, that backs up and blocks us off from God, and we end up drunk again. You know, when we read the foreword to the second edition, it sounded as though Dr. Bob never took another drink after Bill visited with him the first time. That isn't true. Dr. Bob had one more drunk left in him. Not too long after Bill called on him, and they began to try to work with people. Bob found it necessary to go to a medical convention, and his wife Ann begged Bill not to let him go. Said, Bill, if he goes over there, he'll get drunk. He does it every year. And Bill said, Let him go. He's got to learn to live in society where there's always going to be plenty of alcohol. Bob went to the medical convention, got drunk, came back to Akron, showed up at his nurse's home. She called Ann, said, Come and get him. He's drunk. And said, Get him sobered up. He's got surgery in the morning. He's the only

doctor on staff right now that can do this particular surgery. Dr. Bob was a proctologist. Whatever your procto is, I'm glad he wasn't working on mine the next morning. I know that. They went over and got him and brought him back to Dr. Bob's house and they coffeed him and they walked him and they sobered him to the best of their ability. The next morning, Bill took him to the hospital to do the surgery. In the parking lot at the hospital, Dr. Bob said, Bill, I can't do this surgery. He said, I'm sick and I'm shaking and I'm trembling and I'm going to hurt somebody bad. Bill reached in the back seat of the car, got out a bottle of beer, popped the top on it, said, Drink this, and you'll be okay. Dr. Bob drank the beer, went upstairs, did the surgery, and sure enough, it came out okay. Now, the only problem is he disappears. Bill's waiting on him down in the parking lot. He waits two or three, four hours. He assumes that the beer's triggered the allergy, and Bob's off and running. He goes back to Dr. Bob's house. Bill and Ann wait all afternoon. late, late evening. Dr. Bob shows up and he's sober. Bill said, Where in the hell have you been? He said, I've been going up and down both sides of the street making my amends to those I've harmed in the past. That bottle of beer was the last drink doctor Bob took January the 10th, 1935, which is AA's birthday. He never would make amends before because he was afraid people would find out he was alcoholic, and he would lose what little practice he had left. He didn't know that everybody already knew he was alcoholic. The day he screwed up the courage, mustered up enough courage to make his amends, was the day he took his last drink. Now, I would assume if it's good enough for Bob, it's probably good enough for me, too. Let's look at eight and nine for just a few minutes. We're not going to go through them in great detail, just a few

Step Eight: making the list and becoming willing

37:11

Joe 37:11

minutes. He said, Now we need more action without which we find that faith without works is dead. Let's look at steps 8 and 9. You know, generally, if you go to a step study meeting and they begin to talk about step eight. Generally, the conversation will get over to whether or how they made amends in step nine. But step eight is a definite step, and it's a step that needs to be done. He said, We have a list of all persons we had harmed and to whom we were willing to make amends. Said, we made it when we took inventory. We would simply take all those names off of column one, off of those four sheets, and of anyone that we've harmed, we put them on one long sheet. Haven't made any amends yet. We just made the list. And then the book says we subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Well, we did that in steps four and five. A drastic self-appraisal. He says, now we're about to go out to these fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to

live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. More prayer in step eight. And again, it's real simple. We make the list, then we become willing to the list. And if we're not willing, we ask God to help us to become willing. We haven't made any amends yet. That's step eight. And when we do that, then we've completed step eight.

The four lists: right now, later, maybe, never

38:30

Charlie 38:30

Nearly every one of these action steps recognizes itself can overcome self. And we have prayer in most of them. And here we got it again in step eight: that if we're not willing, we ask God to help us be willing. And I had a lot of difficulty in step eight and step nine because there's some people that had harmed me just as bad as I'd ever harmed them. And I didn't feel it was going to be necessary for me to make any amends to them, and I didn't feel like I could, and I didn't want to. And I told my sponsor about this. He said, okay, he said, what I'd like to see you do is take that list that you have and divide it into four lists. And he said, I'd like to see you put on one list right now. I'd like to see you put on another list later. I'd like to see you put on another list, maybe. And I'd like to see you put on another list never. Now, he said, those that you love and you want to make amends to them right now, put them on that list. Those that you know you're going to do it sooner or later, but you're not too keen about it, put them on the later list. He said, Those that you aren't sure about, you may or may not put them on the maybe list. And he said, put the second ones on the later, and then put the third ones on the maybe list. And he said, then those you're never going to make amends to, put them on the nevers list. And then he said, I want you to start making your amends to the right nows. And he said, by the time you're through with that, you'll probably be ready to do some lateres. And by the time you're through with the lateres list, you'll probably be ready to do some maybes. And he reached in his bill folder and got out a \$20 bill, and he said, I'm going to bet you \$20. By the time you're through with the maybes, you'll be ready to start on the endors. And the old fool was exactly right. You know, I was trying to block myself off entirely from step eight and nine by using three or four names, and he didn't let me do that. He gave me a process by which I could become willing to make amends to them all eventually. And it really did work for me. So if you've got that problem or you're working with somebody that's got that problem? Try the four list. Right now, later, maybe, and never. And it really works. Okay, after we've got the list, we're willing over on page 77, we begin to look at step 9. Now, step 9 is a definite three-part step. The first part tells us the kind of amends to make. We made direct amends wherever possible. Direct amends is probably eyeball to eyeball, face to face, one-on-one. So he tells us the kind of amends to make, direct amends. Then he tells us when to make them, wherever possible. Then he tells us when not to

make them, except when to do so would injure them or others. Now, for the next three or four pages, he handles each one of these things paragraph by paragraph. Page 77, that paragraph down in the middle of the page, it says, We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God when it would serve any good purpose. We're willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense. Now, the direct amend starts right here with the words: the question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. Let's look

Step Nine: approaching the man we hated; cousin Gary

42:12

Joe 42:12

at this one. I think in the area of the ninth step, especially since we're going to go out and make amends for the harm done, I think especially we need to talk to our sponsors and listen to our sponsors in this area to get some information about how we're going to go about making these amends. Because we can go out in our zeal to make amends and cause a whole lot more harm than we ever intended or had ever done prior to that, just trying to make amends. So check with your sponsor in this area, lay out how you're going to do it and what you propose to do, and see what he says. very important. See, the question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he's done us more harm than we've done him. And though and though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we're still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It's harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to Him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feelings and expressing our regret. Now, under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply we tell him that we will never get over drinking until we've done our utmost to straighten out the past. We're there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so. Never try to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. And we stick to our own. Now, if our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result. In nine cases out of ten, the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we're doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We've made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam. And every time I read that, I think about my cousin Gary. And I was in the area making amends at this time. And I was in this restaurant one day, and I've never been in that restaurant before or since. And I looked up, and Gary was at the door waiting to be seated. And I motioned him over. Now he came over very reluctantly because Gary and I have been fighting and fussing and physically

and verbally abusing each other all our life. So he came over very reluctantly. He wasn't quite sure what I might do. And I asked him to sit down, and he did reluctantly. And I looked at him and I said, Gary, I found out I'm an alcoholic and I'm a member of Alcoholics Anonymous, and I'm trying to straighten out my life and trying to make amends for the harms that I've done people. And I've harmed you a whole lot over these years, and I want to ask you if you'll forgive me for that. Well, he kind of relaxed like that, and he said, You know, Joe, I want to ask you if you'll forgive me for things I've done to you. That whole deal went away just like that. And that's a wonderful thing. But the best part about it is that Gary comes to Alcoholics Anonymous from time to time, even now. Well, he's making progress. He used to be a daily drinker, and now he's a periodic drinker, yeah. So he's making progress. But he comes to the group that I attend, and we sit down and we'll visit back and forth a little bit as much as he will allow me to. But had that not happened that many years ago, Gary would never come to Alcoholics Anonymous. Maybe someday he'll get sober. I hope so.

Equal restitution and paying creditors; Dan's story

45:28

Charlie 45:28

Eyeball to eyeball, face-to-face, one-on-one. I think we've got to remember now the purpose of making the amends is not to get you to like me. I hope you will when I'm through, but the purpose is to get rid of my fear, my guilt, and my remorse. If I write you a letter, I'm not quite sure how you accepted it. I'm still a little concerned about what you're going to say and do the next time I run into you. I'm not sure I've done my utmost. If I call you on the telephone, I've got the same situation. But if I go to you wherever you are, your office, your home, or wherever it might be, and we sit down, eyeball to eyeball, face to face one-on-one. When I've made my amends, I'm through with it. I'll never have to worry about it again. You've done the worst you're going to do to me right there, and I in turn have done my utmost. No doubt that's the best way to do it. Another kind of amend is in equal restitution or equal amounts. You know, we tended to hurt a lot of people in the material area, also. Some of them we stole from them and never did give them their money back. Some of them we ran up bills that we never did pay. We wrote hot checks that we never did pick up. We tore up automobiles we never did fix. We've hurt a lot of people in a lot of ways in the material world. What are we going to do about that? It really wouldn't do much good for me to come to you and say, Look, you and I both know I stole \$1,200 from you when I was drinking, and I'm sorry about it. Would you forgive me? You're probably going to say, I'm sorry about it too. Where's my \$1,200? Equal restitution. Bill handles that in the next paragraph. Most alcoholics owe money. Now, that's probably the understatement of the year, right there. We do not dodge our creditors, tell them what we're

trying to do. We make no bones about our drinking. They usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on a theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can, we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we're liable to drink if we're afraid to face them. I think what he's saying to me is this: that if I owe you money for any reason. I need to come to you and say, look, I know I owe you the \$1,200 and you know it too. And I'm trying to get my life straightened out. I'm sorry I can't pay you that amount of money today. But what I'd like to do is start paying you \$5 a week, \$10 a week, whatever I can live with. And I start paying you that \$5 or \$10 a week, or \$20, or whatever we've decided on. And as the weeks go by, some morning I wake up and I say, Hey, that sucker's paid off. I don't have to worry about that one anymore. The fear and the guilt and remorse is gone. I go to the next one. And I say, now you and I both know I owe you a couple thousand dollars. I can't pay you today, but I'd like to start paying you about 20 bucks a week. And I start paying you \$20 a week, and some morning I wake up and I say, By golly, that sucker's paid off, too. And then I go to the next one, and then the next one, then the next one, and someday I wake up, and by golly, they're all paid off. And the fear and the guilt and remorse is gone. I feel good back here in the back of my head now after that guilt and remorse and fear is gone. Now Now, a guy came to me one time and we were discussing this. And he said, Charlie, if I tried to pay them so much a week, do you know how old I'd be before I got them paid off. I said, you'll be the same age as you would be if you didn't pay them off. It doesn't make any difference. You know, I've lived long enough to know that time is going to pass. I wish I could stop it, but I can't. And as time passes, I can use it for a worthwhile purpose, do something about these things, or I can keep putting it off and putting it off and putting it off, and five years, or ten years, or fifteen years from now, still be in the same situation and maybe drunk in the meantime. We have a good friend who used to live in Tulsa, moved out here to California. He's gone now. He's dead. Name was Dan. When Dan was 29 years sober, he said, Charlie, I paid the last one of them last week. I said, Dan, how do you feel? He said, I feel about eight foot tall. Now, Dan was a little bitty fellow, about five foot one. He said, This is the first time in my life that I can ever remember that I don't owe somebody something for what I've stolen in the past. He said, I feel pretty good about old Dan. Dan owed a lot of money. When he was drinking, he was in the oil business down in Texas, and he hooked them and he hooked them big. Took him 29 years to pay them, but by golly, he got it done. I tell you how good a con artist Dan was. When he was still drinking in Texas, his wife Sarah, who later became a beautiful member of Al-Anon. She took him to the state insane asylum in Big Spring, Texas, to have him committed for alcoholic insanity. The head psychiatrist interviewed Sarah, then he interviewed Dan. And after a while,

Dan left, and Sarah was locked up. True. She stayed there for a year. She learned how to live better electrically and all that goody-goody stuff in there. Dan was a real con artist, Joe.

Joe 51:38

You know, Dan did he pay back a lot of money. It's not a lot of money out here in California, but in Oklahoma, it's a lot of money. Oh, a lot of money. Yeah. You guys got plenty of money out here. We all know that. But Dan paid them all back, and I spent many, many days and playing bridge with Dan and Sarah, and he and my wife, and they were teaching us the program a lot, sharing with us, and they paid a lot of money back. Now, you'd have thought the kind of money he paid back would have kept him broke, but he didn't. He prospered in other ways. He wasn't rich when he died, but he had a very comfortable living throughout all those years, and he prospered as a result of doing the right things with his debts.

Charlie 52:18

And again, I hear some of you saying, I can hear awful good. He hears good. I hear some of you saying, Well, Charlie, that stuff's probably all right for \$1,200 or \$2,000 or maybe \$10,000. But what if it's a half a million? What if it's a million? What if it's \$2 million? Could we pay that back? I don't know why not. If we're smart enough to steal it, we're probably smart enough to pay it back if we're willing to do so. You know, I think we forget from step three on that God's with us. And if we're willing to do these things, God's going to make it possible to do so, just like He did for Dan. Dan didn't die a rich man, but Dan died a very comfortable man. God saw that Dan had the means to be able to pay these people back. The willingness is what it takes to do this. And it really works for people like us. On page 79, about the middle of the page, it talks about where other people are involved. And we need to really, really consider this now. Sometimes in our zeal to be forgiven for the things we've done in the past, we make amends where we end up hurting the one we owe amends to even more, or possibly hurt somebody else. And if we do that, then sooner or later we're going to have to go back and make amends for that too. So we have to be very, very careful whether other people are involved over on page 80. There he had an example on page 80 where he went to the people involved and got their permission to make the amendment before he made it. In order to be sure everything was going to be okay. Bottom of page 80, he starts talking about domestic troubles. Page 81, he talks about sex outside of marriage. What are we going to do about those kinds of things. Very carefully, he handles just about every conceivable situation that could come up. You know, people I work with, usually we can find the answer to their amends as to whether they should make it or shouldn't, and how to make it here in the big book. Covers just about all situations. The key thing, I think, and Joe said it a while ago, is get somebody else's advice. I've seen too many people jump into these amends too fast and not only hurt other people but end up destroying a

family, destroying a relationship with another human being completely. I think that we should go to our sponsors, get their help, get their advice before we even start making these amends, especially where it involves maybe hurting other people. Page 83, third paragraph. There may be some wrongs we could never fully right. Some of these people are already dead and buried. Some of them, to make the amends, would hurt them or others, and we can't do that. We don't worry about them, and we can honestly say to ourselves that we would write them if we could. Some people cannot be seen. We send them an honest letter. There may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases, but we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people, we stand on our feet. We don't crawl before anyone. One mistake I see us making is we go to somebody and try to make our amends, and they don't accept it. They didn't all accept mine. Some of them said, Charlie, we didn't like you when you were drinking. Not too damn crazy about you now. We'd just soon, you get out of here and leave us alone. And when that happens to us, it just crushes us. And we tend to want to go back and go back and go back and literally beg those people to forgive us. We don't need to do that. If they don't accept it, there's nothing we can do about that. About all we can do is stand in readiness to make it at a later date if the opportunity comes up. But we certainly do not have to crawl before anyone. We are God's people, too.

Amends to Gail and Phyllis; we don't crawl before anyone

56:29

Joe 56:29

As I said here this morning, and I camefully aware, joyfully aware to me this year, all those situations that I used to have that I thought needed to make amends are all taken care of. I mean, every one of them. And I tell you about two here this morning, if you will. When I was drinking, I had a mobile home up north and west of Tulsa, the lake called Lake Keystone. Didn't think my wife knew anything about it. A Nice place. And one morning in the middle of the night, there was a knock on the door, and I finally came to the door, and I opened it up, and what she did, she just broke in. Phyllis did. I really wasn't having a good time. Embarrassed me in front of my girlfriend. Yeah. And our daughter. She brought the daughter with her. I was not having a good time. And now, Gail, she was affected by my drinking, of course. And when she was 17 years old, just a few days after she was 17, she got married to get away from Phyllis and I because Phyllis is in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous now, some 23 years. She's been sober, thank God. But Gail was affected by this. And the book says a remorseful mumbling won't fill the bill at all. Of course, I tried to make a few amends verbally to Gail, and, you know, that didn't. She said that's okay. But it wasn't until six years ago, I was over 19 years, and talking to Gail on the phone, she was living up in Columbus, Ohio. And she said, Daddy, a

thing happened here recently. He said her sister-in-law had died and her husband had died unexpectedly and left two kids for someone else to raise. And she said, If something should happen like that to Jim, and I said, Would you and mom take the kids? You know, that's when I knew that she really had forgiven me. It took 19 years. A remorseful mumbling won't bail the bill at all. Now I'm sober, and I'll call it synonymous for two and a half years, and Phyllis and I get back together. Nine years later, I'm standing in the back of the room greeting people as they come into the meeting place that night. And I looked around, and here's the lady of the mobile home incident.

Charlie 58:34

Phyllis is at the coffee pot.

Joe 58:36

Phyllis at the coffee pot getting coffee, and she looked over their shoulder. You know, it all happened just about that quick. I believe you'll get an opportunity to handle all these situations. God makes it wherever possible. And some of the guys was aware of this situation. They said, What did she say? I said, She didn't say anything for about a week. And we were at another meeting, and here's this lady, and she was trying to get sober and come into AA and again at another meeting, and here's this lady. And Phillips began to talk ugly to me. They'll do that, you know. And I begin to pay the price again, begin to feel bad about it again. Well, after about two or three weeks of this, and one night she was settled down. She'd come back down through the ceiling. And we were able to talk about this. And I said, Phyllis, you know, I've already paid one hell of a price for this. I mean, I have already paid one hell of a price physically, morally, spiritually, financially, in every way you can pay. And what I'm trying to tell you is, I'm not paying anymore. I said, it's just like last month's gas bill. I paid that one, and I'm not paying that one no more. They'll let you pay forever if you'll pay. There comes a

Charlie 59:50

time when you quit paying. We don't have to crawl before anyone. We make our amends to the best of our ability and go on about our business. Okay, if you write with God in 1, 2, and 3, you write with yourself in 4, 5, 6, and seven. You're right with your fellow man in eight and nine. For the first time, as far back as we can remember, we're well in all three dimensions of life. We've been put back together as God intended for us to be in the first place. Now, if you're well in all three dimensions of life, you're going to feel pretty good. I don't think it's by accident. The very next thing are the promises. They come immediately after

Joe 60:38

this program of action. So if we're painstaking about this phase of our development, we'll be amazed before we're halfway through. Which phase of our development? Well, the eight and nine phase. We're going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past or wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we've gone, we'll see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these extravagant prophecies? We think not. They're being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, spiritual experience, sometimes slowly, spiritual awakening, but they will always materialize if we work for them. You know, I've had some very horrendous hangovers in my time, and I know that you guys have too. And I have thrown up sometimes of something horrendously, blood and all, in my drinking career. But you know those kind of experiences never caused me to want to quit drinking. What caused me wanting to quit drinking was the guilt, shame and remorse that I had as a result of the harm that I did other people. And these promises begin to come about in my life. They came about not in my body, but in my mind. I began to experience these things in my mind, and I knew, of course, that the program was working for me. And I'm free of those things today, thank God.

Charlie 62:17

I'm going to read them again. I'm going to add a few words to them. And the words I'm going to add to them refer to the time when I was young, when alcohol was my friend when I could drink it and be Fred to stare on the dance floor and the world's greatest lover in the back seat of a 36 Chevrolet. This is the way alcohol used to make me feel before it turned against me. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I knew a new freedom and a new happiness. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I did not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I would comprehend the word serenity and I would know peace. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, no matter how far down the scale I had gone, I could see how my experience would benefit others. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, that feeling of uselessness and self-pity would disappear. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I would lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in my fellows. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, self-seeking would slip away. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, my whole attitude and outlook upon life would change. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, fear of people and

economic insecurity would leave me. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I would intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle me. Whenever I took a drink of alcohol, I would suddenly realize that alcohol was doing for me what I could not do for myself. Now, think about that a moment. My God, no wonder I love to drink. When you find anything that will do that much for you, you immediately become mentally addicted to the use of it, whatever it is. If it had been chocolate ice cream, by God, I would have been addicted to chocolate ice cream. If it had been Hostess Twinkies, it would have been Hostess Twinkie's. If it had been gambling, it would have been gambling. Mine was alcohol. Alcohol did for me what I could not do for myself, and it was my friend, and it worked for me like magic for years. But one day, alcohol turned against me, and all the things I was afraid would happen to me now begin to happen because of the alcohol itself. I became a very, very confused individual, not knowing I was alcoholic, not knowing I would never be able to recapture these feelings from alcohol. I spent the last four, five, six years of my drinking desperately trying to get these things back from alcohol. Almost destroyed me in the process. I came to AA. You gave me a book. I found a little program of action in this book. I began to apply it in my life. And one day I woke up and found these promises in my head. And I suddenly realized that the first nine steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are doing just exactly for me what alcohol used to do for me when alcohol was my friend. You see, that's why I don't drink today. If I hadn't found this somewhere, I would still be searching for it. I would probably have gone back to alcohol until eventually it completely consumed me and destroyed me. But I don't need to drink because I found everything good that alcohol gave me through the first nine steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. That's the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous. And at the same time, I realized it's given me the good, I also realized the first nine steps have never turned against me, as alcohol did. I've never been placed in jail because of the first nine steps. No lady has ever drugged me through a divorce court because of the first nine steps. I've never vomited. Damn near it in a time or two, but I've never really vomited because of the first nine steps. You see, that's the miracle. And if you read those promises, you'll notice they all deal with the mind. None of them deal with the body. We came here restless, irritable, discontented, filled with shame, fear, guilt, remorse, worry, anger, depression, and etc. We've worked the steps. We received the promises. Certainly, we have undergone a change in our personality. We have undergone a spiritual awakening already. Now, if that's true, then what's the purpose of the last three steps? And many people will tell us the last three steps are to maintain our sobriety. I will agree that they will help us stay sober. But the word maintenance itself is a misnomer. To maintain something means to keep it as is. And another natural law applies. Nothing in our universe ever stays as is. Everything in our universe is in a constant state of change. It's either growing or it's dying. It's progressing or it's regressing. It's going forward or it's going back. Now we've made a tremendous amount of

spiritual growth through the first nine steps if we've got the promises. But if we tried to maintain this, eventually we start slipping back and we start having trouble with people, then with ourselves, then with God, and we end up drunk all over again. Now, how do I know that? I see it happening over and over and over again. That's what happens when people like us who have had a good program go back and get drunk again. It's because we stopped growing. And you can't stop growing. If you do, you start dying.

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