

Blue Clay



Primetime Monks and Drunks
Retreat at San Lorenzo
November, 1992



Primmetime Monks and Drunks



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PREFACE

"Monks and Drunks" refers to a spiritual retreat experienced at the San Lorenzo Seminary, located just north of Santa Barbara, California.

On this occasion more than 50 men gather in celebration of life and living in the message of Alcoholics Anonymous.

There, in grace and serenity, the fellowship of the spirit flourishes... lingering still in the hearts of those aware that once having experienced the Monks and Drunks one never really goes all the way back home...

It is Friday night, November 13, 1992.....

It is the opening meeting at the Monks and Drunks.....

It is the "ABCs" - the stuff of alcoholism, ego, and self.....

Bob A. is the messenger.....

ALCOHOLISM, EGO AND SELF

My name is Bob A. and I am an alcoholic. Traditionally, we open with the serenity prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

We come here to talk about the disease of alcoholism, to identify it, and to become more aware of life, and what it's like when the disease is functioning and showing itself.

I found out for myself a long time ago. When I first came to A.A., the words I heard in those days were words of staying sober; of not taking the first drink; and about attending meetings, getting a sponsor, getting the book; and about the things that were said to me; things that I tried my very best to do; things that I tried to do exactly as I was told to do them.

I came here because I had no place else to go. I had gone as far as I could go in the world I lived in. It was a drunken world. I came to A.A. out of an alky hospital and I tried to do what other alxies seemed to be doing, at least according to what I thought I saw them doing. So I stayed sober, but I remained the same man sober that I had been drunk. For more than two and one-half years in A.A., staying sober -not drinking. I was attending meetings, and I was listening to, and trying to do, many things. I had a sponsor that was a Step man and a God man, and from the moment I got out of the hospital he pounded Steps into me. He did my thinking for me for three and one-half months.

I went into A.A. in Cleveland, Ohio. Then I had to move out here. When I came to California my sponsor would come out here and visit me, and he would stay with me for a month or so, many times. When he was here and talking to me I didn't have problems like I did when I was alone. But I never seemed to be able to get a handle on exactly what this program of A.A. was all about. Yet, I was sober and I was doing everything I thought possible to do.

I did Steps, and the Steps I did were the Steps I was taught to do by other human beings; my sponsor and others that I listened to at meetings. But I had no success. I wasn't aware of what was wrong. I wasn't aware of what brought me here. I wasn't aware of the disease of alcoholism.

The world that brought me here began when I was about 15 years old. At 15 I was working, making money, and I was drinking. I had found the booze and I had found a way of life that included the booze.

When I first came to A.A. I was not aware of the purpose or idea behind spending time at retreats like this one, or going to meetings. So, I was never aware of the disease of alcoholism. I just didn't know what it was all about. Because everybody kept saying the same thing: "Keep going to more meetings; get a sponsor; read the Book; don't drink; you're gonna be all right; you're gonna be a winner." That was a common thing to say in those days and I hear it said today. Well, that sounds good, but it doesn't help people like alxies and it didn't help me one bit.

You know that people would say things to me, and I would listen, I would really listen attentively, and I would want to do these things that people said to do. But I wouldn't know how to do them. Then, they would tell me, "Turn it over. Put a God in your life. Study the Steps. Read the Steps. Do the Steps." They would always say to me, "It's in the 12 Steps." And I would say, "What's in the 12 Steps?" And they would say, "This program of recovery."

Then I would say, "Show me." And they would open the Big Book and show me Chapter 5, *How It Works*, and I would tell them that it was just like reading the dictionary. The words are all the same and all mixed up. I can't do it. I don't know how to do it. So, I was trying to live in A.A. my way. I knew Steps. I knew the words real well, but I couldn't apply them. I couldn't use them. I didn't know what an application was.

I have the same mind today as I did then, but I don't use my mind like I did then. I have a mind that came out of the world I lived in. Now, this world that I lived in is the same for every alcoholic with alcoholism. It's a world I can't live in. It's a world I can't stand. It's a world that keeps turning up-side-down; it keeps attacking me; it keeps hurting me. In turn, I have to fight back. I didn't know what the disease of alcoholism was or how it got started.

For me, when I found the bottle—the drinking, when I found out that I could take whiskey and it made me somebody I wanted to be, it gave me some kind of relief. It gave me answers. It gave me a solution to living I'd never had before, and I wasn't aware that I used it all the time. Everywhere I went I started using booze, and the booze I used gave me a new world, a world that I could live in.

At the time I didn't know anything about alcoholism, and I didn't know anything about needing A.A. or anything else, because I didn't need it then. But as I lived, I kept doing the same things over, and over, and over again. I tried to make each day that I was in a day that I controlled. I picked and I chose. I pushed and I shoved. I did many things back then. I lied. I cheated. I stole. I used and abused people, places and things. And I wasn't aware that the things I was doing then were part of the character I was building inside of me; a character that I became. I didn't know that the things I was doing were registering in my mind. This is where the power is; the power I use in my life today, right now.

There is a method, and I'm not talking about the Steps, although the recovery program is in the 12 Steps. I believe, as an alcoholic with alcoholism, that I must learn a great deal about why I'm here. I must find out what happened to me. I must find out what's inside of my brain. I must find out a great many things about me, not about you, "you" meaning *the world*. That's what this is about.

I couldn't hear this from anybody else. I couldn't read it out of a book. I couldn't get this by going to meetings, hundreds, then thousands, of meetings. I couldn't get this because I kept hearing the same thing all of the time, that all I had to do was stay sober, stay sober, don't drink. And if I don't drink I'll eventually make it. I'll be a winner someday. Someday will come a day when I'll be like my sponsor.

My sponsor had 9 years when I yelled for help. His birthday was in December, 1943. I came into A.A. in December, 1952. He had 9 years, and I thought that after 9 years I would be like him. I would be able to be all right.

But I found out that it had nothing to do with 9 years. I couldn't go any further in my life with what I had. If I didn't change, then I would have to do like the others have done. I would have to either blow my brains out; or, maybe stick a garden hose up a tailpipe and asphyxiate myself; or, I'm going to have to get drunk again, and I knew this.

But I didn't know what was wrong. I stayed sober for two and one-half years and they said I had alcoholism. How could I have alcoholism? I haven't had anything to drink in two and one-half years. But I had no awareness of the disease. They didn't tell me what the disease was and how it got there. That's what this is about, right now.

Today, I see, recognize, and become aware of things in my life today. I also see those same things in the world out there; the same things that were there when I was out there by myself, I mean *exactly* the same things.

Meaning: That I can't be around people, because after I'm around people for a while, I take advantage of these people; I use these people; I hurt these people.

What I'm talking about now is the disease of alcoholism in a mind that I have, that I use. I use this mind *for* my life. It becomes the power that guides and directs me. It's a mind that talks to me, and when it tells me things, I listen to it. When I listen to it by myself I become the man that does things, things like jealousy, anger, envy, and stuff about not having things. "I should have it because you've got it." These were some of the frustrations I used to drink over.

These were the things that started to build in my life to the point where that's all I had to do. Like with women. I've had many women in my life and it's always been the same. I would use them then throw them to the winds. I didn't want them because not one of them could supply what was needed in my life, and I didn't recognize that. So I got rid of them, looking, again, somewhere else.

Over time the disease of alcoholism became established in me. And the character I became was that character every day; a character that became a way of life for me. I'm not talking about in A.A. I'm talking about before A.A. I'm talking about something that was in me before A.A. Then, after I get here it's still in me, and I don't know how to look at that, or how to identify that. It's as if the purpose for being here is lost somewhere.

So I went to meetings when I first came to A.A., and I would listen like you are listening to me, right now. Then I would walk out of the door, and do you know what I would walk into? I would walk into *my* world. All of what was said there was left there. Everything that had been presented to me was left behind. This is the disease of alcoholism.

I came here after going through a hospital where they strap you down on a bed that is screwed to the floor; and they fill you with paraldehyde to keep you from going into the "D.T.s." And even though I realize that, know that, and have really lived through that, I still don't want this thing. I want to be sober, that's all. What I'm describing here is in the Big Book, the 12 by 12 and the Steps. But I'm not talking about Steps now.

I believe that if you're an alcoholic with alcoholism, like me, even if I gave you 12 Steps and helped you to see these Steps, or read these Steps, you still don't have the power to do anything with them, anyway. If you're an alcoholic with alcoholism, like me, you have nothing within you that will allow you to do anything that's needed so that you can do something different, *this* time. That's what happened to me. I tried my very best. I meant my very best. My mind would say to me, "Do it this way because they told you to do it this way." But somewhere along the line that message got mixed-up someway or another. It got shoved aside. So I went ahead, having to do the same things that I'd always done before. By doing that, all I was doing was living in untreated alcoholism; and I was miles from a bottle. Still, I thought that I could get away with it. Yet, I come here and I listen; and I go to meetings and I listen; and I have a sponsor; and I do many things; still I do the same things years later; and they do the same damage years later, sometimes even more, and I'm not even aware of it. I just won't recognize it.

This is the world I live in today. If the shoe fits I have to wear it. I'm describing how

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my mind functions; the *mind-functioning-thing* that happens to me. If it happens to you, the shoe fits you, and you have to wear it.

If you come here to have a popularity contest; or because you have nowhere else to go; or because you think that you need company; or something like that, you may not hear the message that you need to hear. I did the same thing. Like I got past a certain point. This was in A.A.

I was working. I was not giving my money to any bartender. I was working hard. Sincerely and honestly. All of a sudden I was accumulating things. I had a new house and a new car. I still had the same wife that I used to beat-up all the time, but now I'm not using my fists; I'm using my eyes and my mouth, and I think that it's all right. And the disease says, "It's all right, there's nothing wrong. There's nothing wrong with you at all. It's them! They're still doing the same things they've always done." Again, I speak of the disease of alcoholism going untreated. I speak of the disease of alcoholism I carry with me in the day I'm in, every day, when I'm by myself, even after many years of being in A.A.

I have to recognize exactly what it is that I'm doing here. Why am I here in this meeting? Why do I keep going to the books? Why do I keep spending time and money doing this and then turn right around and go out into this world and act the same way, and do the same things that I've always done, all the while thinking the same way I've always thought?

What I'm saying here is said at a Monday night stag meeting again and again. If there's something wrong in my world today, my disease is not being treated. What follows is a repeat performance, a repeat performance I have to again experience today. I'm doing the same things that I did yesterday. My yesterdays are always my future because I don't change.

I've been in A.A. for many years and my alcoholism still keeps going, on and on, and on. I must talk about this, and I must be aware of this. I must keep this alive. I must present this to myself through the fellowship, through reading, and through my very living life. Why should I come here and fill my head with knowledge and never be able to use it, or be affected by it, or be benefited by it? Why do I continue to do the same things over and over again?

I know what I do when you become my friend in A.A., like many of you guys are. All at once I want to be treated differently. I want to treat you differently. I want to be able to make a big joke out of something that is nothing short of using and abusing the privilege of knowing and being around you. I'll take advantage of just about any situation just to satisfy my sick brain and my alcoholism. I'm describing myself. But, again, if the shoe fits wear it.

In A.A. we have been given something very special. We have been given a fellowship, a fellowship through which to help each other, a fellowship to share with each other so that we don't have to go back to where we came from, so that we don't have to re-live and re-do those experiences.

When it comes to A.A. meetings and friends, how often does my brain tell me that it's okay to make a joke at someone else's expense? That it's okay not to let someone be who they are? That it's okay to make fun of someone? I used to be the man who would do this all of the time. This is the disease of alcoholism untreated.

This is one of the reasons for being here and learning about a method of living that will treat my alcoholism, meaning my character and my mind, who I am. This has to be addressed. Because if it isn't, when I get into the application of Steps, meaning: a performance through

what is given and offered to me in the program of recovery in 12 Steps, I won't benefit. won't use them. I'll skip them. I'll go forward, past them. I'll go someplace else. This is because I have to give this up to have what God wants me to have. I'm referring to identifying alcoholism – the disease when it's untreated.

It's there in my mind and it's going to be everywhere my mind goes, if it goes by itself. That means in all of my affairs. Even today many thoughts come to me that I don't energize. I don't feed or give them anything that they need to find expression.

I've still got a problem in my life driving a car, even though I do the best I can each and every day. I can't drive my car by myself. I just can't do it. I have to drive your car and my car too. I'm gonna be critical of everything that you do, and I'm gonna get upset. It's gonna affect me and cause grief in my mind. I won't hurt you, or run you off the road anymore, or anything like that, but I'll think it though, I'll think it.

What I'm talking about right now is the disease of alcoholism when it's not being treated. I must recognize this. I must look at this. I must be willing to say, "I do that." This is what I had to make a beginning with. Because when I would hear someone in A.A., like my sponsor, and he would be talking to me, and he would be telling me things about his life, and about things that were going down that were making his life unmanageable, I never knew what an unmanageable life was. I thought an unmanageable life was something that the world did to me. Like, when I pick on you it's because you're hurting me. You're making my life unacceptable. You're bothering me and I've got an unmanageable life. I didn't know that the unmanageable life was something that I did to the world. How could I think like that?

Before I looked at the Steps I was trying to figure out just exactly what I was doing here. Just exactly what are we doing here, all of us? If we're alcoholics with alcoholism, why is it that we have to keep spending time here? Why do we have to keep going like we're going? I had to find out that it's *me*, not you. I'm the alcoholic with alcoholism. I've got a brain that talks to me. I've got a brain that's injured. It's not your brain. It's my brain. I live in this brain. These are the things I came here for but no one would tell me about them.

You see, if I'm here sober, and if I'm working, and if I'm buying a house, and if I'm buying a car, and if I've got a wife, and everything's cool, what's wrong? Man, there ain't nothing wrong. So, by things not being wrong, self gets the idea that self has everything under control. So I don't need to read anymore, and I don't need to associate my life to God because I'm not in trouble. I used this God I found here in A.A. like a pinch hitter, just like Step 7 says, a "bush-league pinch hitter." The only time I needed Him was when I was in trouble, in an emergency.

Back when I was starting to learn, I should have tried to learn before I got into the Steps just what was wrong with the picture. The picture was wrong because the authority, the power, and the God that I thought was there was really me. I was the dictator. I was playing God and I didn't know it.

On Pages 60 to 63 in the Big Book is where the unmanageable life and the disease of alcoholism are identified. It's there to tell me and to show me that I'm doing these things. But I don't want to read that. I don't want to say, "That's me." So I just slip through it and go past it, thinking that I have everything that's needed. "Just take care of the problems, don't drink, keep going to meetings, and eventually I'll be like my sponsor."

My sponsor had 9 years. Does this mean that I'm gonna have to wait 9 years of doing

what I'm doing before I can have a day that is gonna be a manageable day? No way! I can't go that far. I can't go that long, and I can't go that deep.

There came a time when I had to have a great many things presented to me by God, by a power greater than me, so that I could see something that was in me, not in you. I had to have great help. But great help for me then was nowhere near me. Yet, God kept presenting me with things that were needed in the day I was in. It meant a telephone call from my sponsor in Cleveland, Ohio; or reading the Big Book, A.A. Comes of Age, The Twelve by Twelve, or maybe even the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount did play a big role in my life because I couldn't live by the 12 Steps, I didn't have the power to live by them.

This meant that I couldn't say to you, "Will you help me? Would you help me get past something that's bothering me?" Or, "Would you help me get past something that's killing me?" Or, "Would you help me see, or know, something?" No. I couldn't do that. You see, the disease of alcoholism has an ego factor, and self says, "Don't do that! Don't tell that man anything like that! If you do, he might think you're less than what you are, and he may not like you." That's what this meeting is all about. I learned how to take off the suit of armor that I used to wear all of the time in A.A. to protect me.

The Monday night stag meeting we have has helped a great many guys, alcoholics, especially young guys. It blows me away to see a young man that will actually, honestly, want something for his life so that he doesn't have to suffer anymore. So that he can look you in the eye and say, "Will you help me, man?"

But what do I know by myself? I don't know how to talk to my wife. I don't know how to treat my girlfriend. I don't know how to drive a car. I don't even know how to go to the market without getting in trouble, without seeing someone there that I don't like. I don't know how to live in a world so that I go to bed at night, and put my head on the pillow, and go to sleep. I live in a world that keeps talking to me and telling me that all of these things are wrong. It tells me how badly I acted. It tells me how far my mind has gone into the sewer, and how quickly it will go into the sewer again, and again. It tells me that I want to harm you in some way or another. *Deliberately*, sober. *Intentionally*, sober. *Knowingly*, sober. It tells me how badly I want to show you how wrong you are. This is alcoholism. This is my mind. If you are an alcoholic with alcoholism I know that you have the same kind of mind. I know that it talks to you, and when it talks to you, you listen to it.

I know that I kept looking at this world, and I kept looking at living all the time. I kept looking at living; getting up in the morning and hurrying to work; making some money so that I can buy a car, making money so that I can do this and that; grabbing this and grabbing that. I didn't know that the living part that was going on when I was drinking is still going on now that I'm sober. The mind I use in my life today has the disease of alcoholism. The life I'm talking about is what I am inside. The true man that I am inside. The *inside job*.

There is a 12 Step program of recovery. There is a method of living that's established in the 12 Steps; and there is something else introduced. It happens in Step 2, and is all about a power; about a power greater than me; about a power that's not me; about a power that will do something that I can't do; about a power that talks about sanity – soundness of mind.

No one told me when I got here that I've got a mind that's bent, that's broken, hurt and injured, or that it's going to stay that way. That it will keep running to self all of the time. No one told me that. They said that all I had to do was don't drink. They didn't tell me that I had

a sick mind. I wish they would have, but they didn't. It's in the Steps. It's in Step 2. But I couldn't read that because I thought they were talking about *insanity* and I didn't think that I was insane. I knew that I wasn't insane and this gave my alcoholism more power.

It gave me the idea that, sober, I could be able to handle any situation as long as I didn't drink. This told me that I could do anything and everything I wanted to do today, in the way I wanted to do it, so long as I didn't get drunk. Then, I find myself in A.A., surrounded by guys telling me a lot about *living*, and I'm thinking *that* is the name of the game. *Living*: achieving things, grabbing things, taking things, acquiring things, and my life is heading down the same chute it always has, downhill. My life is. My living isn't because I'm not giving the bartender my living. I'm not giving the bartender all of my dough. All of a sudden I'm sober. I've got possessions. I've got good clothes, good suits. I've got a house of my own. It's got my name on it. I've got cars. I've got two brand new cars. That's living. But I didn't know it.

I also knew nothing about character, nor did I care about my character. I didn't care what you thought of me. I didn't care what I said to you. I didn't give a damn about anything so long as I got what I wanted. This is something I have to talk about. It must be presented to any alcoholic with alcoholism. The moment I got on "safe ground" I became the same person I had always been.

I'm an alcoholic with alcoholism that's not being treated, and I've got a hold of the same old world. I can't live in the world that I'm in, and I'm in a sober world. Yet when I was drunk I couldn't live in that world either, because that world had to have alcohol so that I could live in that world. And I didn't know that the alcohol was treating my alcoholism, because it made the world I was in into a world that I *could* be in.

Here I am, now, in the same world, I'm not drunk, not drinking alcohol, so I'm not treating my alcoholism. Now, I'm restless, irritable, discontented, again. I'm living in the same kind of world I've always lived in and I'm doing the same things I've always done before; yet, I don't even know why I came to A.A. This happens *years* later. I'm not talking about just getting here and then stumbling. I'm talking about years later I'm *still* stumbling. I'm lost, man. Really lost. Sometimes, I still find myself thinking that "safe ground" is the ground I should walk on all of the time, because there's no trouble there if I just stay sober. That's not right. That's not right at all.

Tonight we're doing what we usually do as we start a retreat. We talk about a mind that becomes a power. Our purpose here is not to talk about drunk-a-logs or about yesterdays, or yesteryears, wives, ex-wives, tragedy, trouble or anything like that. It's as alcoholics with alcoholism to discuss and present, in this day, the method of living which is in the 12 Steps, by helping each other to see, recognize and become aware of something that's there.

This isn't about personalities. This isn't about picking on you because I don't like you. This isn't about talking about your neighbor. It isn't that. It's talking about a mind that becomes a power. It's talking about an alcoholic's mind that talks to him and tells him things, and he listens to it. I'm not talking about thinking, because thinking is good. It's *self-talking* that's bad. It was bad a long time ago, and it's still bad today.

Time makes no difference. When I listen to self I get false information, then and now. There's a method of living in the Steps that starts in Step 2 and goes to Step 3. These two Steps present a lot of things I need to know a lot about. Because if I'm gonna find a power greater

than me, and if I am to live in the kind of world that I can live in, then I'm presented with two things of which I know nothing. How am I gonna do this? That's what this is all about.

Like getting cockeyed. I get a little tired and I go a little cockeyed. I lose something and I go a little cockeyed. Somebody wants to take something from me and I get cockeyed, again. I talk funny. I look funny. I act funny. That's what this is about: the disease untreated. It's about a mind that's not drunk, not full of alcohol; yet, when presented with this world and all that's in it, it's a mind that can neither see, nor count, blessings.

Unchanged, I'm gonna act the same way I've always acted. I'm gonna take advantage of you, and I'm gonna say things to you, and about you, as if I'm joking. But the truth is that I'm not joking. I found out in A.A. that every one of us really mean what we say, particularly in jest. When an alcoholic says something he means exactly what he says.

A long time ago I first started seeing the damage. I've caused a lot of damage myself in A.A. because of the disease of alcoholism. Self-talk still tells me what to do, and I still listen to it, never once thinking that something else should be there, except that. Never once questioning what my mind had told me. Never once looking at myself in the day I was in. I still entertained misguided thoughts about other people. No longer could I live this way and go to bed at night and think that I could say to God, "Thank you for this day," and clean-it-up. I just couldn't do it. I can't do it now.

This is about alcoholism in my brain; about a world that keeps turning on me; about thinking less of people around me; and about people around me that truly love me, yet I can't begin to return true love, or show it.

There is something here that I must read about today; something that I must be aware of if I am to have something different than what I've always had. I can't use yesterday's life or yesterday's reading for my life today.

I was taught by a sponsor a long time ago just what was needed in each and every day. Yet, I couldn't do it. Why? Because I would go to the authority of self to find out what was needed, and self would say, "You don't need this. You're all right. You're doing fine. Just keep on going to meetings. Just don't drink. You're all right. 11 Then I heard a message.

There's a message in A.A. The message is in 12 Steps, and only in 12 Steps, because 12 Steps is the only thing that will treat my alcoholism. The Book, the 12 Steps in print, and meetings like this will not treat my alcoholism; will not change me; will not make me a new man; will not stop me from thinking and doing what I say to think and do. I must know this. I must be aware of this. God will not do for me what I will not let Him do.

I must be aware of why these things are here and why they are like they are. I must have more than just words because there is something really wrong here. This is serious business for me. This is *Primetime*, right now. The *very best*. The very best I can be right now is only in a relationship with this God, this power, this Lord, so that the disease of alcoholism is treated. Allowing me to go into the method of the 12 Steps that will treat my life, my living, my being, the character that I am, my everything.

There is a lot more to this than just saying, "I've read this. I've applied Steps. I've done the Steps." I went through the Steps hundreds of times with my sponsor because I had to go through the Steps hundreds of times. But I couldn't apply, or use, or do, the things it said to. Still, I kept trying. Had I stopped trying I wouldn't have made it. I know that. There would come a time when there would have to be something else. I've had babies

that took their own lives, drunk and sober. One guy took a gun and stuck it behind his ear and blew his brains out. He left a note that said, "If there is a God in the hereafter maybe I can find Him there, I surely can't find Him here." He couldn't go through another day with his alcoholism being left untreated. He couldn't go through another relationship, another wife, another girlfriend, another moment, another anything. So he took his life. That's what this is about. The life and death errand is what I'm talking about.

It's about a mind that controls me; about a mind that's injured; about a mind so full of yesterdays; so full of memories; so full of everything that's there from all of the yesterdays. When those things are brought into today's life I can't live this life with those things in there too. It's impossible. It can't be done. I couldn't do it. I know that you can't do it either.

There's a message here for each and every one of us. A message about a program of recovery, about a method that's in 12 Steps. But there must be more than this. There has to be something else too; for without it the method cannot happen.

God made the Steps. Bill wrote them down but God did the writing. And He put Step 2 in such a way that I could hear, see, recognize, and believe this. It says in Step 2 that I'm going to come to believe in a power greater than me that can restore me to sanity.

Rather than going forward the way I'd always gone, I had to go backward, so to speak, to be able to see just where the trouble lies, where the real problem is. It's not you anymore. It's not he, she, us or we. It's me. Only me. The me that God wants to present things to and show things to. Things about believing in a power that can do something for me that I can't do. If it says that I'm going to believe in a power greater than me, then it can't be me, nor can it be in me. It must be something else. Something more than me.

I'm not talking about Steps. I'm talking about the disease of alcoholism. That's why I'm here, to talk about the disease of alcoholism. I can't just hang-around a meeting and expect the meeting to make everything right. I can't say to you that I've been to five meetings this week, therefore, I've got the best life I've ever had since I came to A.A., then turn right around and go out into the world, a world I can't live in anymore. I'm gonna hurt someone. I'm gonna tell my wife that she doesn't know how to do dishes. I'm gonna demand, "Why don't you stop doing this and that?"

Every night I used to come home from work to find the Big Book lying there, opened to Chapter 5, *How It Works*. I didn't put it there. My wife put it there. She never said a word. The disease of alcoholism was there all of the time and no one could tell me. No one could say this or that to me. They couldn't; they didn't have the message. The message was all about me, not about them; not about the world, all about me.

The message is about a program of recovery. The message is about the disease that's in my head, in my mind, right now. That's why I'm here. That's why I come to meetings, right now. That's why I'm at a retreat right now. I don't come here for you. No matter who you are. I come here because I live in my brain. I don't live in your brain. If you live in a brain with alcoholism you'd better start looking at it, and if you should find that the shoe fits, wear it.

The life that I talk about is only in 12 Steps, because 12 Steps is the method. There's a power in Step 2 that turns into a God in Step 3. In Step 3 it says that I'm going to make a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him. Man, now we're starting to do something! Now, there is someone saying, "Why don't you look at this?"

You come here because you have a bad brain! You are here because you need to know something that you don't know!" Instead of sitting here letting me try to figure out what is needed next, all I really have to do is start listening to something that's going on in this world, like tonight, and then just be willing to say, "I might be like that. That just might be me."

I read all of the time. The reason I read is what I'm talking about. It's about alcoholism. Millions of alcoholics who have not hit prisons, asylums, or skid rows – those we are told that constitute the vast majority – those whose best hope of recovery seems to be A.A., have not come to us. Why? And why have they not tried to get well some other way? Any A.A. can give you a quick and accurate answer. They aren't ready. They don't know how sick they really are. If they did they would flock to treatment just as though they had diabetes or cancer. The problem is therefore how do we expose them to the facts that will convince them that they are gravely ill.

When I used to read stuff like that I thought that it was referring to being drunk. thought that it was talking only to people that were still sucking on bottles in bars.

It's talking about alcoholism. It's not talking about alcohol, not one bit. It's referring to alcoholism as a condition that's already established in my brain because I'm an alcoholic with alcoholism. That's who they are talking to, they are talking to me. The Book isn't talking to they, them, or you, it's talking to me. I'm the one with the difficulty. I'm the one who comes to A.A. with alcoholism.

Why is it that I can't hear or benefit from everything that's going on right now? I've been to many retreats, and many other places where the message was being delivered. Still, I would go out from such places into the world, and I wouldn't even get a block away before somebody would do something. Somebody would blow the horn at me and alcoholism would say, "They shouldn't blow that horn. Do something about it!" There and then my disease didn't get treated. Here and now it remains the same. I'm just as sick now as I have ever been.

Why can't I keep driving when someone blows their horn? I can. I know I can because the method says I can. But why isn't the method there? Because the disease of alcoholism is there. That's what this is about. So that I can become someone that I should be. Not someone that I am, or someone that I think I am. But someone I can be according to the will of God and the program of recovery.

There are many things to identify, to recognize, and to talk about. But only in today. It doesn't come from yesterday. This is true for everyone of us, particularly me. I have trouble living in today, only today. I don't have trouble living in yesterday or tomorrow. I used to drink in the day I was in. I didn't drink because tomorrow was coming, or because yesterday just went by. I drank because I wanted to drink now! It's the same with the application of Steps. It's the same thing as trying to see, have, and be who I should be, right now.

When Page 85 in the Big Book talks about how I'm not cured of alcoholism, but what I really have is a daily reprieve, contingent on the maintenance of my spiritual condition, that means today. It doesn't mean all of the years that have passed, nor all of my good works, nor all of my good prayers. It doesn't mean all of the good of everything. None of that, and not one of all of the things that I intended to do, either.

Every alky I've ever known lives in a rehearsal when his alcoholism is not being treated. He has a mind that tells him that he's gonna do something. He has a mind that tells him, "I know how to do it." He has a mind that says, "I'm gonna make it up to her. I'm gonna show

her now, and do something to let her know that I really, truly love her. I'm gonna tell her, "I didn't mean to do that." But that rehearsal never happens. The main event is going on, yet my thought processes in everything I do stay the same. I may mean well, but I won't do well because I can't.

The reason we are here is to talk about today's life with alcoholism and without it. To recognize and see things the way they are. Good or bad. Heads or tails.

But how can I apply 12 Steps if I don't know why they are needed? Or why they are in the order they're in? The first 6 Steps are all about character with alcoholism. Steps 7 to 12 are all about recovery, about performing as a new man; living in a new world; and about having a way to *be* that man.

Long ago I came here and it took a long time for me to hear the message. It took a long time for me to get away from self. It took so long. Throwing days away. Throwing people away. Throwing my very life away. It wasn't necessary. The program of recovery says so. It starts out in Chapter 5, Page 58. "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." It says, "Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program." I was one of those who *would not* do it. It wasn't that I could not, I just wouldn't do it. I did *my* thing. I stayed sober. Page 37 in the 12 by 12 talks about that. It talks about how I'm going to be willing to just stay sober, just not drink. I can take care of the rest of my life as long as I can stay sober. That's not the kind of willingness it took to change the inside of me, where the problem lies.

There is a great environment here. There is much to be said here. It doesn't get any better than this, it can't. This is *Primetime*, but only if you want it. I want it.

There is something to talking about the method, application and performance given in Steps; about being able to see ourselves through someone else talking about how they did it, and how they didn't do it. Now there's something that I can do. I can actually *do* this. The reason I can do this is because God says it needs to be done. This means that my life has now become important to me. My living ceases to be important to me. God takes care of that too.

What I must do now is to *live today in a relationship with a power greater than me*, the Lord of my life, that will treat my alcoholism. Then I can be who I should be. This Lord will give me the power to be the man He wants me to be. I can do these things.

The disease of alcoholism was something that I didn't recognize as I went to meetings and stayed active in A.A. In the beginning when I started to apply Steps, and to learn Steps *as an application* for a performance in the day and life that I was in, I would suddenly find myself on "safe ground." Meaning: That the program of recovery was not in my life in the day that I was in. It was there only when I needed it to be there. I was not aware of the disease of alcoholism or what it was doing in my life and to me.

I thought that I knew Steps and had done Steps. But I'd always thought in terms of Steps being finished, past, or over with. I always thought that I'd done what was necessary to do, and now I'm all right and able to do my thing again. I'm years away from a bottle, but not years away from my mind.

I used to think that once alcoholism was treated it was gone. That it was "alcohol-wasm." I didn't get it. I just didn't recognize that what I must live by today is a method that comes from 12 Steps and a power. The power comes from Step 2 and Step 3, meaning God. If I don't have the method *and* the power then I will again do the same things that I've always done.

I must be aware that there are two things involved, two ingredients, not just one. If I try to do the method by myself, or if I pray to God only and forget the method, nothing changes in me, and it's me that I'm talking about.

I can read, hear and comprehend a great deal, and I can recognize 12 Steps and agree with everything they say, but I often forget an ingredient that is needed. This power, this God that I'm talking about, enables me to do, live and apply the method that is in 12 Steps.

Alcoholism remains a force and a power in my life, even after many years in A.A.; even though I still read; even though I still go to meetings; even though I still get on my knees and pray to a God. When I don't use that as a method and application in my life today I go right into alcoholism-thinking, and I start looking at the world the same way I always have.

This is about alcoholism, ego and self. This is about identifying, describing, and looking at something today, this day, about what's wrong with me, why I'm here, and where alcoholism is. I must keep looking inside of me today, this day. I can't look at you and judge you.

The reason I ask this power greater than me to help me is because He makes me aware of who I am, what I am, and why I'm here. He gives me countless blessings. He guides and directs my thinking. He is giving me these words to say right now. He restores me to a sound mind. He does for me what I can't do for myself.

If I don't talk about this and read about this, do you know what I do? I do my thing, the same thing that I've always done, and when I do it I find myself all alone, again; pushing and shoving; trying to take advantage of you; using and abusing today, this day, again.

The number of years I've been sober don't count for today, this day, even when my alcoholism tells me that I'm okay; that I've been around for a long enough time to be entitled to take advantage of someone; that I'm allowed to make fun of someone, or make jokes about his life, or to look at him like he's dirt. My mind still tells me such things, and I still listen to it.

I come here so that I can get away from that mind of mine, which is me. But if you don't tell me, and show me, I'll never see me. I'm talking about the reason I'm here. I want to be more aware of why-I'm here. I want to be able to go through each and every day as it comes in the way God intends. Just as He has shown me through so many years. You wouldn't believe how many years.

This can only happen in the day I'm in because I can't bank on yesterday's performance. I can't bank on yesterday's prayers. I can't bank on yesterday's anything. If I don't have it right now, I don't have it, period!

I'm no different than anyone else. Man, I'd love to walk on water. I'd love to get rid of a brain that keeps going into the sewer. But I can't. I'd have to get a new head, or a brain transplant, or something like that.

I'm trying to show you something to start off this retreat so that you can allow God to open doors for you. So that He can present you with something that's not of your own mind or making.

When we get into the Steps it'll be in an application form, and in that form everything is there. There are only 12 Steps for everyone of us with alcoholism. And it doesn't matter what walk of life we come from; where we've been; or what we've done. These things don't count.

Intelligence doesn't matter either. If it were a question of how smart we are then some of us wouldn't have to come here. If it were a question of how dumb we are then some of us would never get here.

The Bible was written for humanity. The Big Book of A.A. was written for alcoholics with alcoholism, not for my neighbor. He doesn't need it. He gets the power and the method he needs for his life from the Bible, from the church, and from the alter. I know this because I see it all the time. But if you take someone like me, no way!

As an alcoholic with alcoholism I need a method and a power which is God. These two things together treat my alcoholism. Then I can live like God says I should live. But I must live with God and the method today, this day. No yesterdays. No tomorrows. Today. That's what this meeting is about. This is the message.

Long ago I learned that I had a mind that talks to me. And when I'd listen to someone share, I'd hear things that had not been said by them, but were put there by that mind of mine, all by itself. I remember when someone would come up to me and ask, "How are you doing?" And I would say, "What do you mean by that?" The way I heard it was, "You aren't doing so good." This is the disease of alcoholism.

I'm talking about identifying something that's in me. Something that brought me here. Something that I drank over. Something that kept my mind in the sewer. Something that's still in me now, meaning today, this day.

If I don't have the grace of God so that the 12 Step method is being used today in a performance, what am I going to have? What am I going to do? As an alcoholic with alcoholism if I'm not seeking God's grace and the method, then I'm doing what I've always done: my thing.

I must look inwardly to see this. I must see self and who self is. I must recognize the disease of alcoholism that's in my mind. It's there right now, and it's going on right now. It's a living thing. It's a power in my mind and in my life today, this day. It's not a "wasm."

I've been coming to A.A. for a long time; and every time I come here I bring alcoholism with me; and it can kill me now the same way it could have killed me when I was new. I still have only a daily reprieve in the day I'm in if I treat this alcoholism because this is the day in which my alcoholism must be treated. It doesn't treat with time, nor does it treat in the future, or in the past. It treats today, only today, only in this day.

Alcoholism is not a static thing. It grows as I grow. It's established in my mind, and it's a power in my life. But when the word "power" was used I didn't know what that meant. I do know today. It means something other than physical power; something I knew nothing about. It's not about intelligence-power, college degrees, or anything like that; nor is it about being the smartest person in the world; or the dumbest; the richest or poorest; biggest or smallest. It's the disease that qualifies. That's the thing that brings us here, and is treated here with the same set of Steps, the same application, and the same power, for all of us.

Tonight we talk about the ABCs of alcoholism, ego, and self. It's information that was presented to me that gave me *a beginning in the application of Steps as a method of living*. It's information that I must still consider today, this day, as an alcoholic with alcoholism, if I am to be the man God wants me to be. I want to be that man.

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Please join me in a moment of silent meditation, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Keep coming back, it works!

SATURDAY AM.
November 14, 1992

STEP ONE

My name is Bob A. and I'm an alcoholic. Let's open with the serenity prayer. God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Last night I talked about alcoholism, ego, and self. And I talked about a purpose in the Steps, in that there is an application that I must become aware of, and other things of which I must become aware; just because they are there to be considered. Not by coincidence or by accident...a greater purpose.

Steps are the program of recovery; meetings are not; nor is reading, although both are necessary and essential; but neither treats alcoholism. I had to learn this because when I came to A.A. I immediately got wrapped-up in the notion that told me that I was all right just because I was going to meetings and I was staying sober, not drunk. It was necessary for certain things to be presented to me, just as it was necessary for me to be able to perceive those things, if I was to have something other than what I had.

My sponsor told me to take the word *we* out of the Steps, and put *me* in there. I'm not gonna tell you to do, or not to do, something; nor am I gonna tell you that because I did something now you must do something. But for me to make a beginning, things had to change.

Step One says that I admit I'm powerless over alcohol and that my life is unmanageable. This was the beginning of a different deal; a deal where self knows that this is all about me, not about you. This is about what I need, not what you need, though you may be an alcoholic with alcoholism. This is me and I'm here for me, only for me, not for you in any sense of the word.

So the program of recovery became a way of life that I needed to become aware of, a way of life that I had to keep looking at. So when I say that I admit I'm powerless over alcohol – that my life is unmanageable, there's a greater purpose.

When I first looked at Step One, I thought that by admitting something, like being an alcoholic with an allergy of the body and an obsession of the mind, I agreed with that because of my past track record with alcohol. But alcohol is mentioned only once in the Steps, in Step One. It's not mentioned again.

So I have to have an awareness of why a Step would be put in there and what it says, so that I can benefit, or have something, from this. In the 12 by 12 Step One covers only four pages. Yet, this is for my life, my lifetime for almost forty years. Now, how could four pages for Step One treat my life for forty years? How could it do that? What is it? Is it something I did and now it's gone, it's removed, and I never have to look at it again? I never questioned these things. I didn't look at them. I just went ahead and kept going to meetings saying, "Well, I've done Step One. I know all about this. I know all about that. And now I'm somewhere else," and so on.

When I say that I admit that I'm powerless, there are principles at work. That means that I accept something as true and valid. I no longer question it, challenge it, or argue with it. I must begin to become aware of what the idea is behind Step One and why it's there. Why would I want to admit that I'm powerless over alcohol? To keep me out of bars? Is that what I'm doing? No; I don't think so. This is something entirely different.

Step One has a dash in it that changes the context of what it's talking about, so there's more than one thought expressed. In other words, when I admit that I'm powerless over alcohol that's the end of that idea. That's the end of the deal right there. The dash takes it into another area that isn't part of the first part, the alcohol.

The second part – *that my life is unmanageable*, takes on great meaning in each day. Today, this day is the day in which I must become aware of what constitutes an unmanageable life, and what an unmanageable life means to an alcoholic with alcoholism, like me. Why my life is still unmanageable after many years of not drinking. This is an introduction and a beginning that flows from the ABCs into Step One, so that Step One will serve a purpose.

It's not a reading process. It's not something I can store in my mind and say, "I'm an alcoholic. I've got alcoholism. I've got a physical allergy and a mental obsession. Now I can go ahead in the program of recovery!" That will not help me or benefit me in any way. Because what goes on up here in my brain will not stop me from drinking. I know that. It talks about that in the first part of Step One.

Another important part about this for me is that what I'm talking about is not something from a long time ago. I speak in this day, for this day.

This is a daily method of living that starts right now with the application of 12 Steps. I had a sponsor that told me that if I don't start the A.A. recovery program when I wake up in the morning in my home, meaning wherever I may be, he said, "You haven't got one." And I just couldn't put that together. I just couldn't get that, or become aware of what he meant.

What he was talking about was a method of living, from the moment I wake up until the time I go to sleep; a method of living that's gonna be in a program of recovery. And this is what I need to have, not what I think I should have. So I had to have a direction, and many things had to be said.

When it says in the 12 by 12, "when first challenged to admit defeat," that's when they put me in the hospital; that's when they took me out of the hospital and took me across the street, downstairs, into the basement of a church. That started my A.A. life. It didn't start the program of recovery, it just meant that I was at an A.A. meeting.

It says, "when first challenged to admit defeat, most of us revolted. We had approached A.A. expecting to be taught self-confidence. Then we had been told that so far as alcohol is concerned, self-confidence was no good whatever; in fact, it was a total liability. Our sponsors declared that we were the victims of a mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human will power could break it. There was, they said, no such thing as the personal conquest of this compulsion by the unaided will. Relentlessly deepening our dilemma, our sponsors pointed out our increasing sensitivity to alcohol-an allergy they called it. The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: First we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that ensured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. Few indeed, were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in single handed combat. It was a statistical fact that alcoholics almost never recovered on their own resources. And this had been true, apparently, ever since man had first crushed grapes."

This says to me that I came here because I drank a lot. I drank booze a lot. I lived with booze and it was going to kill me, it was going to kill me dead. I knew that. My own past track record proved that. Each of us carries with us that track record. But it also tells me that

even though I'm sober it's *still* gonna kill me. This is a death sentence for an alcoholic, whether or not he wants to look at it. It means that even though I stopped drinking I'm gonna die, I'm not gonna make it. The reason I won't be able to make it is because I've got something wrong with me. I'm still talking about the alcohol-side of things; I'm still talking about the drunken side of things; the drunken behavior; the drunken-stage-of-life, and so on. And I can't get away from it with my unaided will. I can't stop it. There's no way. I don't have the power.

Step One tells me, after the dash, that my life is unmanageable. But I don't know what an unmanageable life is. I thought that just staying sober, not drunk, was the name of the game, and that alone was the ticket for this recovery program. It's not.

Step One tells me that my life is unmanageable when I'm drinking. My life is unmanageable when I'm drunk and that's very, very evident. But it also tells me that after I'm sober my life is still unmanageable whether I'm wet or dry, drunk or sober, it makes no difference at all.

In the beginning I had no other choice but to go to, and to live in, A.A. On Page 58 of the Big Book it says, "Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not..." I was a "will not." I wouldn't believe this. I wouldn't look at this. I wouldn't accept this. I said, "No way, man. That's not me. All I really have to do is just don't drink." And I started thinking like that. The next thing I knew the Big Book was closed. I listened to my sponsor. He was a good man and I believed him. But I would go my way regardless of what he said to me. When I admit something I have to start becoming aware that something is going on.

While I already knew about the alcoholism side of Step One, I didn't know what was needed to start a method, or a way of living, or a beginning, into something other than what I was doing. In Step One, where I admit that I'm powerless over alcohol, it describes me one hundred percent.

When I first read the question, "why all this insistence that every A.A. must hit bottom first?" and the answer, "...that few will sincerely try to practice the A.A. program unless they have hit bottom. For practicing A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking," I stopped dead in my tracks.

I stopped dead in my tracks because I had to find out what was going on and what was needed to see it. I couldn't see this because my mind was talking to me when I first read this many, many years ago. When it said, "For practicing A.A.'s remaining eleven Steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking," I wasn't drinking! I said, "Man, I'm past that. I'm beyond that. That's not me," and so forth. But I forgot what it says in the second half of Step One, that my life is unmanageable whether I'm drunk or sober. It refers to the disease of alcoholism that's there whether I'm drunk or sober, wet or dry.

So, I had to change that. I read it, "...the adoption of attitudes and actions that no alcoholic who is still *thinking* can dream of taking." I said, "Man, isn't that something! Man, that's really something! That's me! The moment it was presented to me it took the world off of my shoulders. It freed me from old ideas. I needed to know this.

"That my life is unmanageable" means that alcoholism is involved in my thinking processes. On Page 23 of the Big Book it says, "These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion.

Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than his body."

Holy mackerel! Here I am in A.A. and I'm thinking the same way I always have, and I'm in the same place I've always been in. I'm gonna die and I'm not drunk. I'm gonna die and I'm sober. So, I must learn why I'm here and what this is about.

The 12 by 12 continues: "Who wishes to be rigorously honest and tolerant? Who wants to confess his faults to another and make restitution for harms done? Who cares anything about a Higher Power, let alone meditation and prayer? Who wants to sacrifice time and energy in trying to carry A.A.'s message to the next sufferer? No, the average alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, doesn't care for this prospect-unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself." Step One is an introduction to a program of recovery, and I must have this.

The disease of alcoholism is not only powerful, it's devastating and it's a killer. Not only will it kill me, but it will kill the world around me, and everyone in it. No way can I skip this or say, "I know all about this," or, "This isn't me!" It is me, and I must have this.

It takes Twelve Steps. That doesn't mean that it takes just one Step, or that one Step is more important than the others. They are all special because they each do something, and when that's happening each one takes on special meaning so that I can continue farther along in the program of recovery. But I must start somewhere. The beginning is Step One. It wasn't when I went into the hospital.

One of the things that is presented to me in Step One is the concept of principle. In the beginning I didn't even know the word or what it meant in application, meaning living, form. I had no idea what it meant to live by principles; everything happened too fast to think about principles. So I did something else: I changed the word "principle" to truth. The truth. I had to keep looking at the word truth. Truth. Truth. Truth. I've looked up the word in the dictionary and I've looked everywhere to find the answers for me about why the words say what they say; and what these words mean to me, an alcoholic with alcoholism.

I found out that a principle is a truth, an essential truth upon which other truths are based. Science uses a principle: search and research with an open mind. So I had to start identifying these things. This was the beginning of a new way of life where I could now have something that I'd never considered before. I'd never known how to do it, why it was there, or how I could get there. Then, I started to look at some of the reasons principles are important. I had to know these things.

In the Foreword of the 12 by 12 it says, "A.A. 's Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practiced as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole." That's where I started. In Step One the truth started coming to life, and I started to have something in my life I'd never had before: An awareness of what Step One says. I began to get a new insight so that I could perceive things; so that when I got into the application of Steps they took on new meaning. This was a beginning to a method of living. This was where my direction came from. This meant that I had to go farther into everything from that moment on. This is something that goes on constantly, every day, right now.

The 12 by 12 says on Page 21, "No other kind of bankruptcy is like this one. Alcohol, now become the rapacious creditor, bleeds us of all self-sufficiency and all will to resist its demands. Once this stark fact is accepted, our bankruptcy as going human concerns is complete. But upon entering A.A. we soon take quite another view of this absolute humiliation. We

perceive that only through utter defeat are we able to take our first steps toward liberation and strength. Our admissions of personal powerlessness finally turn out to be firm bedrock upon which happy and purposeful lives may be built.

When I was put into the hospital I had done a lot of things. I was a service manager and thought that I had a lot of things going for me, and I thought that I was a real capable guy. But I wound up strapped down in a locked room, in a world I didn't know. I was hurt and suffering; wondering this and wondering that; and I was asking myself, "Where do I go from here? Man, I'm totally lost."

When I got out of that hospital I'd hit bottom and I was down at the bottom of the barrel. I'd not only hit a financial bottom; I'd hit a total bottom in terms of self-worth and self-esteem. I'd hit a bottom where I was nothing and I knew it. But, then I got my job back, and my wife back, and I started to be king of the castle again; and I forgot what I'd started. I wasn't admitting defeat; I accepted nothing; and I wasn't surrendered.

When I read "we know that little good can come to any alcoholic who joins A.A. unless he has first accepted his devastating weakness and all of its consequences," I had no idea what *acceptance* meant. I thought that the life that I had now would allow me to do anything I wanted to do, and I still didn't know that anything was wrong with me. Yet, if I was going to be able to admit that I'm powerless over alcohol and that my life is unmanageable, I was going to have to start looking at who I am; I was going to have to start seeing something that's *me*. This was a beginning.

Last night I spoke about alcoholism, ego, and self. This isn't something I did many years ago and got past. This is something I must be aware of right now, in this day, every day. The change of character has to start here so that it becomes a way of life. Because when I go from Step One into Step Two as a program of recovery, *as a method of living*, I take Step One with me so that the principles that have guided and directed me in this day are kept alive.

I can't apply Step One and then leave it alone. I must have more than what is there. I must have more than that. I must give this everything I've got today, this day. This must be an attitude that I have about the rest of the Steps, and about the program of recovery. I've got to give one hundred percent. Meaning: one hundred percent of what I've got from this moment on in the program of recovery.

One hundred percent is all of whatever I have right now. If I have ten percent, twenty percent, thirty percent, fifty percent, whatever percent; I'm gonna have to give all of whatever I have right now. If it's only twenty percent, then I'm gonna have to give this program of recovery the best shot I've got today, meaning one hundred percent of that twenty percent. I must become aware of this.

Alcoholism is a killer. It's a killer that will stop me when I've been given an opportunity to do something in the day I'm in so that I can benefit, grow, and change; so that I can experience program of recovery; so that I can be the man God wants me to be. This killer disease will stop me dead in my tracks.

Recovery means going in another direction. It doesn't mean that I stand still now that I've arrived in A.A. Step One is a beginning, so that when I'm presented with this day, there are principles at work and a direction to follow... and only because of a *growing experience* in an awareness. This is something that any of us can do today, right now.

In the first part of Step One I admit I'm powerless over alcohol. The second half-the

unmanageable life-is the world that I live in that I can't live in by myself. It's a wrong world. Alcoholism always causes my mind to go nuts.

I used to think that the unmanageable life was all of the destruction; all of the money I threw away; all of the people I hurt; all of the misery I caused myself and others; everything back when I was drinking.

When I got sober I thought that I'd left the unmanageable life behind me and that it referred only to being drunk, or drinking, or drunken behavior. I didn't know that the unmanageable life is now, today, this day; whatever this day is. By myself, my life is unmanageable, drunk or sober.

I have a mind that looks at the world in such a way that I can't live in this world. I had to learn what an unmanageable life is to an alcoholic with alcoholism. I had to learn that when I'm looking at things and I can't accept the things I see, there is something wrong with me: my life is unmanageable. I began by starting to learn something that I had to be aware of, and I really had to become aware of this, because if I wasn't aware of this how could I do anything about my alcoholism? Why should I keep on suffering? Why should I keep on going to meetings like this one and not get any benefit? Why do I continue to expect other people to perform in ways that they cannot, then refuse to accept their performances? This is the unmanageable life.

This is an introduction into a program of recovery for today. This is not for yesteryears, or for when I first got here. It's not something that I can do so much of that I store up enough of it in me so that I'm okay today without more. One thing that Step One really did for me, and to me, was to slow me down. It started to enable something to happen even though I didn't know that anything was happening.

For an alcoholic with alcoholism, treatment starts in Step One in a method. Step One covers a lot of ground, and I'll bet that I could write a bigger book than the Big Book on Step One application alone, meaning what I'm doing and why, and how I'm doing it. And it would start right here: admitting that I'm powerless over alcohol -that my life is unmanageable.

It's now possible, even for someone like me, to be someone that I should be, rather than who I am. That's why I came here, but no one ever told me that. They told me to just stay sober. They said, "Just don't drink; go to more meetings; get a sponsor; read the book." But that's not the message that treats alcoholism; the message I needed to hear; the message that will change me. Without more there is no message.

If reading were the message what would any of us do? If merely reading Step One was the process that treated alcoholism then I might as well quit right now, because reading alone doesn't work! It's essential for other reasons, but reading does not treat my alcoholism. Only a method of living in Twelve Steps can do that.

There is a purpose here, so I might as well start identifying and becoming aware of the role I am to play here, because I'm here for me and this will treat my alcoholism. I don't have to look anywhere else. I've got Twelve Steps here and now.

One of the most important things that I found in Step One is the awareness that, drunk or sober, my life is unmanageable. That's what this is about, right now.

We don't have to bring anything with us to A.A. other than our minds, meaning that we don't have to know how to do this. I thought that I did. I thought that I could read this and I would know what it means; how to act; what to do; what to say; everything. That can't be true,

because if it were there would have to be more than one set of Steps. I would have to have my set; you would have to have your set, and so forth. But there is only one set and that set doesn't need anything that you, I, or any other human being can offer to it. It's already complete in its entirety. It already does what it's supposed to do. It's already there in the fullness of what is needed to treat alcoholism, for any walk of life.

Stop and think about it. Through all of the years since Bill and Bob got together the same Twelve Steps are still there for the same purposes and reasons. They haven't been changed or modified. They'll fit any walk of life for any alcoholic with alcoholism, anywhere in this world. This is something I must look at and consider. This carries immense experience.

If this will help any alcoholic from any walk of life to change his character; to make the world that he lives in a world that he can live in; and then supply everything that is needed in each and every day, then it will help me the same way. I've been in recovery for forty years, and if it is true for me it can be true for you too. But it doesn't come in forty years; it comes only in a one-day-at-a-time application for this day, in this day, and this day only.

STEP TWO

Step Two says: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Remembering what my sponsor had told me about changing the word we to me I read it: Came to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. Otherwise, my head was always in a position to tell me that I'd already done this: I already know this; there's nothing new here; I don't have to go through this again; this isn't talking about me; and so forth.

I spent my first two and one-half years in A.A. with no awareness of any of this, I didn't have a clue. I went for all of that time thinking that I was smart enough; I understood enough; I was sober enough; I'd been around long enough; I'd gone to enough meetings; I had the best sponsor; I knew it all, and so on. And yet, I would sit in meetings like this one totally and painfully lost. And I knew that I had to find ~something other than what I had, but words alone didn't get it done.

In Step One the unmanageable life is identified and established, as is the disease of alcoholism. It says that my life is unmanageable whether I am wet or dry because of a mental obsession so powerful that no human power, not mine nor yours, can relieve it.

Once there was a man, an alcoholic that I talked to. His life was much different than mine was. I asked him about it and he told me that he had a God in his life doing for him what he couldn't do for himself. He said, "Why don't you try my God? What you have doesn't seem to be working."

So I started asking him about this God that he talked about, and he told me that all I had to do is pray and believe. I asked him, "What should I pray for?" And he said, "Pray that He will come into your life and do for you what He has done for me. Before you know it you 're gonna be believing before you pray." I asked him how he did this, and he told me that he called Him God; he told me that he got on his knees, and when he did that; he told me a great many things about his relationship with this power, this God that he believed in. So I started doing exactly what he said he had done, and I did it with his God; I didn't have one. I didn't even know the word.

I asked this God in prayer, on my knees, if He would help me with my mind because it was angry and hostile; it was upsetting people; damaging people and relationships; and turning everything around to where I knew that something had to be done. So I asked this power to help me. When I was at work I would ask God: "What do I do here? What do I do there? How should I think here? How should I think there?" All of the time I was following the direction of another alcoholic in a performance.

A short while later the guys at work were not my enemies anymore; they'd say, "Hey, are you going to church?" They started asking me to go to coffee with them; they started talking to me; I started laughing; I took my eyes off the floor; I started to have friends. It was exactly as my friend had said that it would be when he said, "Before you know it you're gonna be believing before you pray."

So, I kept going back to this God in prayer, and the reason I kept going back was because something was happening in my life. I was coming to believe in something I knew nothing about. Step Two says that I'm going to come to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. I was doing that without any reference to Step Two, and I had no idea what that meant. I didn't know who God is; I didn't know who I am; and I didn't know anything about power.

I never knew that I was a power. I'd always identified myself as who I was because of who I was: I had to get up; I had to shave; I had to drive a car; I had to do this and that. I didn't relate that to a mind-functioning thing; I didn't relate that to a thinking-process functioning as a power in my life, not merely affecting it, but directing it.

There and then I was being shown something that I had to become aware of if I was to believe in something other than myself. I had to get out of, and away from, me. I couldn't rely on my stuff anymore. That's what I'm being told here; yet, my head tells me that this says something different, something it doesn't say at all. I thought I knew what Step Two was all about until I became aware of the words soundness of mind.

There was much more to be revealed as Step Two took on new meaning because of what "power" came to signify, the kind of power it talks about on Page 45 of the Big Book. Before I knew it I was living in a new world; a world I had never known before. I'd never gone around thinking thoughts like the ones I was entertaining, thoughts that actually give me something: soundness of mind.

I found many new beginnings in the words of Step Two, and that journey continues here and now where the bottom line is soundness of mind. Soundness of mind means wholeness of mind; something I don't get with my unaided will. That's because my mind is far from centered; it's disturbed, bent and broken, and wrapped-up in selfishness all of the time, and in the things that I want in the way I want to have them.

This is an introduction into a new way of life that I never lost through drinking. I never had it to lose in the first place. From the time that I was young I did everything on the spur of the moment and nothing was permanent. My head was always telling me, "Just give me what I want and I'll be okay."

Believing in something other than me means that I can't go to me. It means that I can't go to my head for answers and solutions. Experience says that I've had no success that way. How can I expect a different result now? The truth is that I can't, no matter what my head may tell me.

I was shown something in Step One about a disease called alcoholism from an unmanageable life that is still going on, right now. Many years ago I became aware that something was being identified on Pages 60 through 63 of the Big Book, and I've marked a lot of books there; not for purposes of treatment or change, but only for an awareness that what it says there is all about me, and it's there for me, it has to be. I must be aware of this and it must be presented to me this way so that I can have what I'm supposed to have through a program of recovery.

In the Big Book, in the ABCs, it says, "That God could and would if he were sought." Then it says, "Being convinced we were at Step Three ... " It also says, "The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self will could hardly be a success. On that basis we are almost always in collision with something or somebody. Even though our motives are good, most people try to live by self propulsion." Then it goes on to describe me, and it says this is the how and the why of it: "First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that hereafter in the drama of life God was going to be our director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father; we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom." Now that is Step Two.

This is all about me. This is all about my coming to believe in a power; a power not me; a power greater than me that can restore me to sanity, soundness of mind. This is an introduction about who I am and who God is. It says power, it doesn't say God. It says power because with an alky like me who never wanted a God, never knew or prayed to a God, I never even used the word until another alcoholic introduced me to the program of recovery in the Steps. Step Two is an introduction into a power that I use for my life that I shouldn't use, and all about another power that can do something about that other power, something I can't do.

On Page 25 of the Big Book there is something that I've been reading for years. I know it by heart. I believe it and I know that it's true. It talks about the solution. It says, "The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves." The great fact is the solution.

Step Two is all about that great fact, and all about identifying and becoming aware of something I can believe in; something that can do for me what I can't do for myself; something I can trust and rely upon; and in doing so I'm presented with a solution that treats alcoholism that really works. It's the same solution for any alcoholic with alcoholism, and it only works in the day that I'm in. It only works right now or it doesn't work at all. That's because I live in the here and now. I live in this very moment, and I must have that something right now if a new reaction is going to be possible.

The program of recovery has brought many new words into my daily vocabulary; it has also given new meanings to the words I already have. New meanings, not in understanding, but in an awareness that there is something I should seek in each and every day, as I live my life in each and every day, but only for the day I'm in.

I don't have to live in an unmanageable life anymore. I don't have to suffer the highs and the lows. I don't have to get so disappointed, so full of depression. I don't have to live like that. This is the beginning of a new way of living; a method of treating alcoholism. If you're an alcoholic with alcoholism you should know that this is the method that treats it.

Before A.A. there was less than a two-percent success rate in treating alcoholism in all of the religions, hospitals, doctors, and jails, you name it. But now we have something going for us. Why not take advantage of this? If you're an alcoholic with alcoholism this may be the only chance you may ever have to live a good life. What do you have to lose by trying the very best you can to seek, to believe, and to have this? That's what this Step is telling me, right now: That I'm gonna believe in something other than me that can do for me what I can't do for myself. That's what this is saying.

I'm now being introduced to who I am. The disease was already presented to me in Step One; I've already admitted that I'm powerless over alcohol; I've already made a beginning in an awareness that my life is unmanageable. Now I'm told that my life will always be unmanageable; that unless I have sanity, soundness of mind; unless I believe in something other than me, I'm gonna die. Worse yet, I'll live in the same living hell I've always lived in, and I'll be the same man I have always been. I'm powerless to do anything else.

This is important. This isn't just words. This is laying out something so that you don't have to figure it out; you don't have to be like I was. I would go to meetings and when I would leave the meetings I went nowhere. I was still running on fear and resentments; my brain was still running overtime and I couldn't stop it; it just wouldn't quit.

Slowly, my mind started changing. One day my wife, the gal I had taken through the drinking years, said to me, "You know what? Something is happening to you. You don't scare me anymore in the night. You don't wake up screaming anymore, the bed wet from sweat."

Slowly, my mind stopped working overtime. Before, my mind lived in untreated alcoholism ninety-nine percent of the time. Slowly, I was starting to change. Slowly, I was starting to think differently; I was starting to look at life differently than I had before. My life was starting to become important to me; I was starting to laugh and to have friends; I was starting to live a life I'd never known before; my eyes were not on the floor anymore; I started to see that there was hope. This opened the door to a method of living. This meant a great deal to me. I talked about this last night.

When I began to have friends we would go to coffee and we would tell jokes. I really got a kick out of that. I made it a point to remember a lot of jokes so that I could make people laugh. This gave me different intentions; this gave me new thoughts and new thinking; this opened the door to the method of living in the fellowship; this is about why the fellowship has what it has.

On the bottom of Page 17 in the Big Book it speaks of a solution, of a way out upon which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. These are things that I need to become aware of.

My sponsor had something, an attraction. I didn't know what it was at the time, but he definitely had it. and I knew it. He had a way of life where drinking was not necessary. He spoke of the grace of God; an undeserved gift from God, doing for him what he couldn't do for himself. He was always talking about a way of life that he used for his life. I'm talking about my life, right now. Page 17 goes on to say, "The tremendous fact for

everyone of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism." And just what is brotherly and harmonious action? It's certainly not found in bars. It's in A.A. meetings; in reading the Word; in sponsorship and in helping each other to have this way of life. My sponsor did that for me, and there were countless others ... there, in brotherly and harmonious action.

The 12 by 12 tells me that all I truly need is an open mind. That means that I must resign from the debating society; that it really doesn't matter which came first -the chicken or the egg. In the program of recovery Step Two is a rallying point for all of us, and we stand together on this Step. True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith, and every A.A. meeting is an assurance that God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to Him.

I didn't have an open mind when I came to A.A. I had been programmed for years with preconceived ideas fixed in experience and established in my mind. One of the first things I had to do was to find out just exactly what is meant by the words "open mind." An open mind is a mind that is not controlled by self, meaning me. In other words, for me to have an open mind I must literally be out of my mind.

An open mind means a mind that is receptive to the will of God in anything and everything. I must have this awareness if I am to be receptive and open minded so that the truth can enter my thoughts. I use the word "awareness" because of what my head does with the word "understand." The word understand, or understanding, stops me from going farther into something, because my head persuades me that I already know enough about something and that nothing more is needed. When I say that I understand something, the first thing that my head does is to shut-off as if there is nothing more than what I already know. Step Two application requires an open mind, which means that I must be aware of what a closed mind is and why it's closed. This frees me from me.

Step Two talks about coming to believe in a power greater than me. So, where is this power? Is it in my brain? No! It can't be any part of me. Step Two says so and introduces me _to something else; something not me, yet, something that must be there so that I can go on to Step Three. There are things in this method, this application, that will be needed in Step Three, and these things are presented in Step Two, just as other things are presented in Step One.

I speak of principles: truths that will guide and direct me; truths that I can use in my life, for my life, as I live in my life; truths that set -me free from the bondage of self and its limitations. My journey into principles began in Step One then went to Step Two, and it is the fact of these principles, these truths, that makes it possible so that Step Three can be presented to me.

Step Two provides an introduction to the concept of an open mind that allows something to happen inside of me today, in this day, even after all these years. Open mindedness means for a lifetime, just like the Steps, and that means right now. Today, when I sit in a meeting and listen to another alky share I must keep an open mind. Why? Because if my mind isn't open, then it's closed. As a result I don't participate. My mind shuts-off and it goes back to the San Fernando Valley, to a gal there I like to think about. My body may be present but my head is one hundred thirty-five miles south of here.

It is fairly certain that you can't feed me something that I don't want to be fed. I remember when I was first being shown things about myself. I would become thin-skinned like all alkyies are and I would take everything personally. I thought the things that were being said by someone about himself were all being directed at me and I didn't like what I was hearing or the alky that was saying it, either. It was, and is, a classic example of the unsound mind, a mind living in an unmanageable life. The Third Step Prayer identifies the bondage of self and talks about being relieved of it. This brings me down to earth as a person, not as an angel. It's this power that is presented in Step Two that restores me to a sound mind and relieves me of the bondage of self. This is truth that I can trust and rely on.

STEP THREE

Step Three says that I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him.

When I first looked at Step Three I was the same man sober than I had been drunk, and I stayed that way for more than two and one-half years in A.A. All of that time I just took it for granted that I knew a great deal about what was being said to me and presented to me. I thought that I was a pretty smart character, and I assumed that I knew all about this decision and all about making it. I also operated under the assumption that I knew what my will and my life were all about, and everything else.

I was not aware that my will is the power of my mind; that my will is the power that I live by; that my will is what I am and who I am; that my will controls me; that my will is the power that I go to, think with, act from, and feel with through emotions and "feelings," which is exactly why "feelings" cannot be trusted: Because of the place they are coming from. It's a place that's injured and damaged, a place where self is supreme. It's a way of thinking that became established in my mind over a period of time; time spent living with and for self; time spent trying to satisfy self; time spent powered by self, and all of it involved the power of my will.

My will is all about my brain, and all about the way I think and the way I act. This isn't something mysterious and remote, this is my life and it happens to be the only life I've got. It also happens to be the life I'm living right now, this very moment.

This is all about the brain I brought to A.A. on day one, many years ago. It also happens to be the same brain I have in my head right now, this very moment. Then, as now, I have nothing within my resources that will supply what is needed so that I can do something different, this time, so that a new reaction is possible. Step Three makes that possible, so that there can be a different man behind my eyes and my ears, my senses and my perceptions, everything that is hooked to my brain.

My life is not my will. My life is what I'm doing, right now. My life is the *performance* that I'm in, in the day I'm in, here and now. This is my life.

The words, "God as I understood Him," means to me that in Step Two I found out who God is and who I am. This doesn't mean that I have to try to understand God. This is not an "understand" thing, it's an *understood* thing. I was shown in Step Two that I can believe in a power greater than me that will do for me what I can't do for myself. This doesn't require "understanding." It's a statement of *fact*.

The words, "my will and my life," mean everything that I am: every thought and every deed, all of me. This is about what I must do, and now is when I must do it, right now! This tells me that *action means prayer*. The best that my life can be today, right now, is only in a relationship with God, this power; so that my disease is treated; allowing me to go into the method of the Twelve Steps that will treat my life, my living, my being; therefore, the character that I am...my everything. Then I can be the man God wants me to be. But left to my own devices I'm gonna be the same man I've always been, and I'll do the same things, the same way, I've always done them. I'm powerless to do anything else, which is one of the principles I was introduced to in Step One.

Step Two presents me with the concept of *open mindedness* meaning: a mind that is receptive to the will of God in anything and everything. This awareness is necessary in anything and everything so I don't get trapped by my thoughts; so I don't get trapped in what I think is going on out there. This is a method that I can live in today, *for* this day. This is a method where God supplies everything for my life. This method has no scales to balance.

One of the many things that are presented in Step Three concerns a key that will open the door to faith. The key is willingness. Being willing to be receptive to the will of God in all things means that this method will prevent me from getting lost in the unmanageable life no matter where I may be in this day. I must have this awareness.

When first presented with this decision for my life and my lifetime, I missed the mark completely. I then just kept on living the life I was living; in the day I was living it; the way I was living it; and I didn't change. Then the days became months; and the months became years; and, still, I had no program of recovery in my life and I remained the same man that I'd always been, and I knew it. I knew it for a long time.

Step Three tells me that God wants a performance from me. This is a principle, a truth, that I can rely on. This is something I can trust and believe; this can help me and do more for me than I can do for myself; this says, "*action means prayer*." This is what prayer is all about – about getting away from self. This is what prayer does for me; it allows me to talk to something other than me. When I talk to a power greater than me I get soundness, wholeness, of mind. If I'm not talking to this power, this God, then I'm talking to self, and I'll have a repeat performance in untreated alcoholism.

There's a method here so that should I get trapped in my head, no matter where I may be in this day, all that's required is for me to put the key back in the lock, meaning: to allow God in, because He will restore me to sanity: a sound mind, and this I understood from Step Two.

Over the years there is one question that I've been asked by just about every alcoholic I've ever met, and I've asked the same question myself, many times. That question is: "How do I know the difference between my will and God's will?"

Step Three says that I'm going to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him. If I have done that, then I have no will left to know anything from. So, if I'm trying to figure out what is mine and what is God's that can only mean that I have yet to turn my will over to God. It means that I'm still trying to have it my way. The fact is that there's something inside of me that wants to have a correct answer, and have the right words at the right times, so that I don't have to worry anymore about anything. It means that I'm playing God again.

The 12 by 12 tells me that the other Steps of the A.A. program can be practiced with success only when Step Three is given a determined and persistent trial. Then it says that this statement may surprise newcomers. Then I found out what a newcomer is. A newcomer is an alcoholic living with alcoholism in each day of his life as he lives it. This is because each day is a new day based only on itself and time doesn't do anything but go by. Time doesn't treat alcoholism, only higher power can do that, and only in today.

This is the method that has to be in the day I'm in, right now. Now is when I need the guidance and strength of God in my life. The "newcomer" the 12 by 12 talks about is any one of us, whether we just came here and are new in A.A., or whether we have been in A.A. for many years, it makes no difference. This application must be going on right now, today. The principles, truths, presented here fit any alcoholic with alcoholism. I've been around A.A. for forty years and they still fit me just like they fit you if you suffer from the disease of alcoholism. It's not a "wasm" for any one of us.

The 12 by 12 goes on to say, "This statement may surprise newcomers who have experienced nothing but constant deflation and a growing conviction that human will is of no value whatever. They have become persuaded, and rightly so, that many problems besides alcohol will not yield to a headlong assault powered by the individual alone. But now it appears that there are certain things which only the individual can do. All by himself, and in the light of his own circumstances, he needs to develop the quality of willingness. When he acquires willingness, he is the only one who can make the decision to exert himself. Trying to do this is an act of his own will. All of the Twelve Steps require sustained and personal exertion to conform to their principles, and so, we trust, to God's will."

Man! You can't be more specific than that! This tells me that I can be with God right now! I can exert the willingness! Trying to do this is an act of my will, not your will, my will! I can have this right now, this very moment! Right now I can be with a power greater than me that is going to help, guide and direct me, right now! Right now I can make a decision for my life, a decision to turn my will and my life, which is all of me, over to His care! He will take care of me. He is the Father. I can do this right now because it's an act of my own will, and it's when I try to conform my will with Gods' will that I use it rightly. This isn't something that I'm going to do tomorrow or some day in the future. I can, and must, do it right now!

Step Three application gives me something, right now, in each and every day of my life; something that's consistent; something that's always there; something that's proven. That means as I live this life, no matter where I am or what's going on this power is there to take care of me. He will empower me and strengthen me; He will guide and direct me. No harm will come to me.

This is nothing less than a passport to freedom from self. This is an assurance that I can get away from self. This means nothing less than relief from the bondage of self in this life, right now! This sets me free from a diseased mind that I can't get away from on my power alone.

Step Three is where I ask God to help me. The 12 by 12 tells me that the effectiveness of the whole A.A. program rests upon how well and earnestly I have tried to come to the decision presented in Step Three. It is Step Three that introduces dependence, as practiced in A.A., as a means of gaining true independence of the spirit.

Today's life comes in today's prayers as God intends, and He wants me to be with Him.

This takes me somewhere I could never go before. This powers a design for living that really works for alcoholics with alcoholism. I don't know of any other that does.

Each day is a day when my alcoholism must be treated, and as each day comes and goes I don't need anything from any other day to treat it. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow hasn't arrived yet. Here and now is when I must do this. The relationship I had with God yesterday rewarded me yesterday. Today, being a brand new day, requires a performance from me today, so that God can guide and direct me; so that God can do for me what I can't do for myself, right now!

In Step Two there is only one power greater than me to be understood, a power that becomes a God in Step Three. Step Three is all about a performance that must be going on right now or it doesn't count, it doesn't matter, because if I'm not in the application of a method of living in Step Three as a way of life right now, then there can only be one other power at work; my power, and I'm powerless to make it any other way. This is where I'm presented with a decision that becomes a lifetime process, and it's this process of living in a method that changes character in an alcoholic with alcoholism.

This method empowers me so that no matter what my present circumstances may be I can, immediately, live in a new and wonderful world. This means that I'm all right. This means I don't have to try to understand anything. This means I don't have to bring anything with me to A.A. to get this thing. It's not necessary. It's not needed. God doesn't require that from me.

Recovery means exactly what it says, recovery: Away from where I have been; away from how I think; away from how I act; away from the way I do things. Recovery carries with it an immense experience in a performance in the seeking of God's will and the power to carry that out, and so I let God discipline me in this simple way.

In Chapter Six it talks about this. It says, "As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day, 'Thy will be done'. We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works—it really does. We alcoholics are undisciplined so we let God discipline us in the simple way we have outlined, 11 which means the Steps.

The discipline it's talking about is what we are doing, right now; meaning the discipline God presents to me and wants me to have as an alcoholic with alcoholism, sitting here right now; meaning that my brain tires easily when my brain tells me it doesn't want to hear something or someone. I have a brain that wants to get this over with; a brain that wants to get away from this room; away from these words; away from the truth; away from the power that's here in this fellowship. There's only one kind of discipline that's going to be able to deal with the kind of brain that rejects a totally undeserved gift of grace-like my brain does, and that's the way that God disciplines us; each of us in our own relationship with Him. This is truth that sets me free; truth that sustains me; truth that I can trust and rely on; truth that gives me life anew every time I go there; every time I contemplate, "Thy will not mine be done. 11

This also means that dependence becomes a principle, a truth upon which other truths are based and from which other truths flow. Dependence is a truth that must be alive in an

awareness in my life today. It must be there. It has to be there because of what the disease of alcoholism does to me when it's not there.

The 12 by 12 says, "But the moment our mental or emotional independence is in question, how differently we behave. How persistently we claim the right to decide all by ourselves just what we shall think and just how we shall act. Oh yes, we'll weigh the pros and cons of every problem. We'll listen politely to those who would advise us, but all the decisions are to be ours alone. Nobody is going to meddle with our personal independence in such matters. Besides, we think, there is no one we can surely trust. We are certain that our intelligence, backed by will power, can rightly control our inner lives and guarantee us success in the world we live in. This brave philosophy, wherein each man plays God, sounds good in the speaking, but it still has to meet the acid test: How well does it actually work? One good look in the mirror ought to be answer enough for any alcoholic."

The cornerstone to the rebuilding of the rejuvenated soul of an alcoholic with alcoholism is the principle of dependence, as practiced in A.A. This dependence is the single-most significant event in my life today, this total dependence upon a power greater than myself. Meaning: that I don't depend upon meetings anymore; I don't have to depend upon my sponsor, or upon something else, whatever that something else may be, to supply what is needed in my life today.

Dependence isn't difficult to perceive or seek when adversity calls. I've had no trouble conjuring-up my brand of dependence when the heat is on me and I'm forced to get honest with self. But, when everything is running smoothly; my bucks are up, and everything is cool, what then? That's what this is about, right now, so I don't become restless, irritable and discontented because of my perceptions of people, places and conditions, or anything else like that.

Experience has shown time and again that every time I go to God, He is there. Every time I call on Him, He is there. Every time my life is at stake, He always says, "I'm with you." If I make a mistake, my God says, "Stay with me." Then, He allows me to come to you and say, "I'm sorry" and genuinely mean it, not just to set the record straight so that I can do it again. I really mean it.

I found out that I can do this. It happens in my life and it turns me around. I don't have to stay disturbed; I don't have to stay in the unmanageable life, and the best part is that it's that way in all of my affairs, if I want it. I want it.

This program of recovery is a proven method of living that will treat alcoholism and present any alcoholic with the tools he needs, not just to survive, but to live and grow in a new and better way of life in a relationship with a power greater than himself.

The Twelve Steps grow in my life through application in a relationship with God; a performance in a method of living that flows from the experience of dependence upon a power greater than me, which enables me to grow spiritually. Spiritual growth enables change to come about within me, and it is this change of character that allows me to become the man God wants me to be. This is the how and the why of it.

Today I must again experience an awareness of what Step Three is about, why it's there, and how it places me in a direct relationship with the truth, so that I can make a decision to do something, something I must do today, everyday, all through this day, right now! And, it's much more than just something that has to be done...it's a life-and-death-errand for any alcoholic that suffers from the disease of alcoholism.

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Let's close with the Lord's Prayer ... Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever ... Amen. Keep coming back, it works!