

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #11

More About Alcoholism

(Session 14a -00:10:34.)

Big Book p. 37, par. 4 *"Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jaywalking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles."*

J & C Now I don't understand this guy at all. But I can see him out here on the interstate, waiting for a truck or bus to come down through there. Jumps out in front of it, spins around two or three times. Sees how close it can come to him without actually hitting him. For some reason he gets a thrill out of it. Don't understand him but I can see him doing it.

Big Book p. 37, par. 4 cont. *"He enjoys himself a few years in spite of friendly warnings."*

J & C People say, "Hey Bill, you better quit doing that. You're going to get yourself hurt."

Big Book p. 37, par. 4 cont. *"Up to this point you would label him as a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. "*

J & C He's getting a little older now. He can't move as fast. They begin to hit him once in a while. Nothing serious, he just kind of bounces off of them.

Big Book p. 38 cont. *"You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. "*

J & C Now he got hurt bad this time.

Big Book p. 38 cont. *"Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. "*

J & C He gets hurt bad again. Now he sings our national anthem.

Big Book p. 38 cont. *"He tells you he has decided to stop jaywalking for good, "*

J & C He says "Man I'll never do that again as long as I live"

Big Book p. 38 cont. *"but in a few weeks he breaks both legs. On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by his continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, he can no longer work, "*

J & C He's just so beat up now he can't hold a job.

Big Book p. 38, par 1 cont. *"his wife gets a divorce, "*

J & C She's tired of supporting him, the kids and the hospital bills.

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Big Book p. 38, par 1 cont. *"he is held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jaywalking idea out of his head. "*

J & C Not his body, his head.

Big Book p. 38, par 1 cont. *"He shuts himself up in a treatment centre (an asylum), hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he?"*

You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jaywalking; the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It's strong language--but isn't it true?"

J & C Oh I think that's so appropriate today. You know, once again because of education many, many people are getting to us before they have to lose everything. Occasionally you see somebody come in here that's still married. And once in a while they come in and they've got a job. Believe it or not, I saw one come in about a month ago he still had an automobile. And we start talking to those people about insanity and they say "Man don't tell me I'm crazy. I haven't lost anything. I've got my job, I've got my blah blah". No, uh-uh. We're not talking about that at all. We're talking about one thing and one thing only.

Can we or can we not see the truth about alcohol. If we can we're sane, if we can't then we're insane.

Now the low bottom drunk like Jim, it's probably easier for him to see his insanity because he lost everything that he had period. A high bottom drunk who hasn't lost a lot of stuff, sometimes it's a little more difficult for them to see it. But I'll tell you, **whether you're low bottom or high bottom, if you get drunk, you're going to get drunk the same way. Believing something that is not true.**

Let's go to page, whatever the next one is, 39. My old pages are so tore up I can't read it anymore. Now we're going to look at a guy named Fred. Now Fred is the opposite of Jim. Fred is high bottom. Fred never lost anything. Jim didn't feel too good the day he got drunk. Fred is on top of the world the day he gets drunk, yet he got drunk the same way. He believed a lie. Let's look at Fred's lie.

Big Book p. 39, par 2 *"Fred is partner in a well-known accounting firm. His income is good, he has a fine home, is happily married and the father of promising children of college age. He is so attractive a personality that he makes friends with everyone. If ever there was a successful businessman, it is Fred. To all appearance he is a stable, well-balanced individual. Yet, he is alcoholic. We first saw Fred about a year ago in a hospital where he had gone to recover from a bad case of jitters. It was his first experience of this kind, and he was much ashamed of it. Far from admitting he was an alcoholic, he told himself he came to the hospital to rest his nerves. "*

J & C We see lots of nerve resters in AA today. Just like old Fred is.

Big Book p. 39, par 2 cont. *"The doctor intimated strongly that he might be worse than he realized. For a few days he was depressed about his condition. He made up his mind to quit drinking altogether. It never occurred to him that perhaps he could not do so, in spite of his character and standing. Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic, "*

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J & C He would not take Step 1.

Big Book p. 39, par 2 cont. *"much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problem. "*

J & C If you can't take one, you can't take two.

Big Book p. 39, par 2 cont. *"We told him what we knew about alcoholism. "*

J & C They told him about Step 1 and Step 2.

Big Book p. 40 *"He was interested and conceded that he had some of the symptoms, "*

J & C He said, "I'm a little bit alcoholic." Borderline case.

Big Book p. 40 *"but he was a long way from admitting that he could do nothing about it himself. He was positive that this humiliating experience, plus the knowledge he had acquired, would keep him sober the rest of his life. Self-knowledge would fix it.*

We heard no more of Fred for a while. One day we were told that he was back in the hospital. This time he was quite shaky. He soon indicated he was anxious to see us. The story he told is most instructive for here was a chap absolutely convinced he had to stop drinking, who had no excuse for drinking, who exhibited splendid judgment and determination in all his other concerns, yet was flat on his back nevertheless.

Let him tell you about it: "I was much impressed with what you fellows said about alcoholism, but I frankly did not believe it would be possible for me to drink again. I somewhat appreciated your ideas about the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink, but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned. I reasoned I was not so far advanced as most of you fellows, that I had been usually successful in licking my other personal problems, that I would therefore be successful where you men failed. I felt I had every right to be self-confident, that it would be only a matter of exercising my will power and keeping on guard.

"In this frame of mind, I went about my business and for a time all was well. I had no trouble refusing drinks, and began to wonder if I had not been making too hard work of a simple matter. "

J & C We think Fred began to get drunk right here. He began to say "Ah this staying sober is easy. Nothing to this"

Big Book p. 40, par 3 cont. *"One day I went to Washington to present some accounting evidence to a government bureau. I had been out of town before during this particular dry spell, so there was nothing new about that. Physically, I felt fine. Neither did I have any pressing problems or worries. My business came off well, I was pleased and knew my partners would be too. It was the end of a perfect day, not a cloud on the horizon."*

J & C Everything is on top of the world for old Fred. He's doing great. Making lot's of money. Family's happy. Business associates happy. Everything's good in Fred's life.

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Big Book p. 41, par 1 *"I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, the thought came to mind it would be nice to have couple of cocktails (and go back to the hospital)"*

J & C Now that's the truth isn't it. No way could he drink on the truth. His mind said

Big Book p. 41, par 1 cont. *"it would be nice to have couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more. "*

J & C Now based on the insane idea, he makes a decision, takes some action.

Big Book p. 41, par 1 cont. *"I ordered a cocktail and my meal. Then I ordered another cocktail. "*

J & C And we've got it inside ourselves now. The allergy takes over.

Big Book p. 41, par 1 cont. *"After dinner I decided to take a walk. When I returned to the hotel it struck me a highball would be fine before going to bed, so I stepped into the bar and had one. I remember having several more that night and plenty next morning. I have a shadowy recollection of being in an airplane bound for New York, of finding a friendly taxicab driver at the landing field instead of my wife. The driver escorted me about for several days. I know little of where I went, or what I said and did. Then came the hospital with unbearable mental and physical suffering.*

"As soon as I regained my ability to think, I went carefully over that evening in Washington. Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against that first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all. I had commenced to drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale."

J & C Now is Fred's real problem the fact that he has a physical allergy to alcohol or that he has a form of insanity that tells him it's OK to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. **The real problem centers in the mind telling us we can drink, rather than in the body, that ensures we can't.** Page 43, last paragraph.

You know Bill had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it. Rowland had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it. Fred had the idea that self-knowledge would fix it. Bill is trying to show us here, they all had the obsession of the mind. He's trying to show us here through the illustrations, the man of 30, Jim, the jaywalker and Fred, to tell us one thing. The last paragraph says, Once more. You see he just went through all this to say

Big Book p. 43, par 3 *"Once more: the alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power."*

J & C And that is the solution.

- You can't heal a sick mind with a sick mind.
- Self-knowledge won't get it.
- The more we try to think our way out it, the deeper into it we get.
- It must come from a Higher Power. Our defense must come from a Higher Power.

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And you notice he didn't say "the practicing alcoholic" or "the drinking alcoholic". He just said the alcoholic. Now what that means to me today is that I have no effective mental defense against the first drink.

Left on my own resources, invariably I'm going to go right back to drinking again, without the aid of a power greater than human power.

More About Alcoholism

(Session 14b -00:09:20.)

J & C Now if you're the kind of alcoholic that I am, and if you were raised in the kind of church setting that I was raised in, by the end of Chapter 3 you are now faced with one hell of a dilemma. Because he's convinced me in Chapter 3, without the aid of a power greater than I am, I'm going back to drinking. But I also felt that even though that was true, it would be, it wouldn't be possible for me to get the aid of a power greater than I am.

Because you see, like Joe, I was raised in a good old southern Baptist church. Now I've got nothing against the good old southern Baptist church, it's a great church. But when I was a kid growing up, I'm sure that from time to time they talked about a kind and a loving God.

But if they did, the message never got to the pew I sat in. Cause all I ever remember hearing about God when I was growing up in church was hellfire and brimstone and going to hell for lying and cheating and stealing and drinking whiskey and committing adultery. By the time I got to AA I had being doing that for about 20 some odd years. I knew that God had already told St. Peter, "When that little four eyed sucker gets up here send him downstairs. We'll not need his kind." And I knew that if God had anything to do with me it wouldn't be anything good. It would certainly be something bad.

I remember so clearly when I separated from God. In that Baptist church I grew up in, they gave me the rules. They said if you do this, this and this you'll be OK. If you that, that and that you're going to hell just as sure as anything. Now I didn't have any trouble with the rules at all, until I got to be about 12 or 13 years old. And one day it seemed to me that the preacher looked me straight in the eye and he said "Son, to think about doing it is just as bad as doing it". And I said, "Oh shit". I've had it now because I'd been thinking about doing it for a long time. In fact I'd been thinking about doing it long enough I was starting to get brain damage from it. And I said "If you're going to hell for thinking about it then you might as well just go ahead and do it". And I did. And I didn't go to hell immediately. And I said "That sucker has been lying to me all along". I said, he and my parents and my teachers have formed together in a conspiracy to keep me from having any fun. And I said, from this day on I do not intend to pay any attention to what they have to say. I don't have any intention of following God's rules, their rules or anybody else's rules. From this day on I'm going to do it my way. And I'm going to do it whenever I want to and if they don't like it, to hell with them.

Now when I got to AA, I had that attitude of a 12-year-old boy who had defied God, his parents and his teachers. When I first walked into AA I was 38 years old with the spiritual knowledge of God of that 12 year old boy. No wonder we have trouble with this God thing when we get to AA. Anybody else ever have those kinds of feelings about God and people?

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And I think Bill recognized that. And I think he said, “Sooner or later I’m going to have to ask these people to make a decision about God”. And I think he said in his mind that they’re not going to be able to make that decision based upon old ideas. And that’s what I had when I got here, old ideas. And I think he said, “I believe I need to give them some new information about God”. Where they might be able to discard some old ideas, pick up some new ideas, and then they’ll be able to make a decision about this God thing.

And he wrote another Chapter called, **We Agnostics**, which I think is one of the greatest pieces of spiritual information I’ve ever read in my life. As I read that and studied that I could see where some of my old ideas, old prejudices, about God and religion, were wrong. And when I could see where they were wrong then I could discard them, and then I could accept some new ideas about God and then I could make a decision. Now based on hellfire and brimstone, based on a God of justice, no way could I have ever made the decision about God. Thank God for Chapter 4. Let’s look at just a little bit of it just before we go to lunch.

Dr. Jung told Rowland about ideas, emotions and attitudes. That’s what we’re going to be looking at now. Ideas, emotions and attitudes, which were the guiding force of the lives of these people, are suddenly cast to one side. And certainly the ideas, emotions and attitudes that I had toward God were that of a 7 or 8 year old boy. I couldn’t accept it then, I couldn’t accept it later, I couldn’t accept it when I got here and I can’t accept it today because I need new ideas and emotions and attitudes about this. New information is what I’m trying to say.

This chapter We Agnostic, just the word agnostic means something to me.

nostic means knowledge
put the **ag** in front of it, it means without.

Those of us who are without knowledge.

And that was me. And the knowledge that I did have was not good. And Bill had the same experiences that we did. When Ebby presented him with the solution he was aghast at that solution. Some of us are aghast at that solution also. And Bill said “When they talked of a God personal to me my mind became irritated and my mind snapped shut against such theories.” And certainly that’s the way that I did. Later on in the book it says to us that when the spiritual malady is overcome we straighten out mentally and physically, the spiritual malady.

The understanding of God of my understanding.

When that is straightened out we will straighten out mentally and physically. And this chapter here, We Agnostic, is an attempt to do that.

And as Father Bill Wilson, some of you know Father Bill said to us many, many times, and I love it, he said that this chapter is not put here to teach me that there is any particular type of religion or type of God. He said this chapter is simply put here so that I might read, question and wonder and get some ideas, emotions and attitudes, some new ones. And open up my mind to the point that God might prove to me there is a God. Now with that understanding of this chapter, it makes more sense to me and becomes extremely valuable in my life.

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Big Book p. 44, par. 1 *In the preceding chapters, you have learned something of alcoholism. We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely,*

J & C because of the obsession

Big Book p. 44, par. 1 cont. *or if, when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take,*

J & C because of the allergy

Big Book p. 44, par. 1 cont. *you are probably alcoholic.*

J & C God isn't that simple? Isn't that simple?

You see how people like to expand on things. They took the 2 questions out of the big book and some years later they made a little pamphlet that had 10 questions in it. And that wasn't enough, they made another one that had 20 questions in it. Hell I think we're up to 44 today aren't we? Thank God that Ebby didn't have the 44 questions with him when he walked into Bill's kitchen.

He'd have said "Bill, has alcohol been bothering your reputation?" Hadn't had a reputation in years. Then he would have said, "Bill has alcohol been interfering with your sex life". If he was anything like I was he wouldn't have had any of that in a long time either. There's a statement in the 44 questions says "Do you drink alone?" Well think about it. If I'm buying yes, and if you're buying, no.

We had an old friend that used to live in Tyler, Texas. His name was Wino Joe. I've always felt sorry for everybody in AA that didn't get to meet Wino Joe. He was a real character. He's dead now. But Wino Joe had made up his own list to ask yourself to see if you're alcoholic. And the first question on his list was "Has the roof of your mouth ever been sunburned while drinking?"

He said, "If it has, you're probably alcoholic." I think the second question was "Have you ever been arrested for drunk driving from the back seat of somebody else's car?" The third one I loved was "Have you ever been arrested for public drunk while in jail?" He had a real list of them. We only need these two. I use them all the time.

We Agnostics

(Session 15 -0:17:55.)

J & C People come to me today and say "Charlie do you think I might be alcoholic?" I say, "I have no idea. Let me ask you a couple of questions." Have you been able to quit drinking entirely left on your own resources? If they are a real alcoholic, they've got to so no. And then I say, "Do you have any control over the amount you take after you've once started drinking?" If they are a real alcoholic, they've got to so no. And then I say, "Well you're probably an alcoholic". That's about as simple as you can make it. Now if that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

You know we are very unique people. We number amongst **few people in the world today who suffer from a two-fold illness that can only be overcome by a spiritual experience.** We also number amongst a few people in the world today who have a terminal illness that we can come out of it in better shape than we were when we went into it, if we can have this spiritual experience. We are unique people.

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Big Book p. 44, par. 2 *"To one who feels he is an atheist or agnostic such an experience seems impossible, but to continue as he is means disaster, especially if he is an alcoholic of the hopeless variety. To be doomed to an alcoholic death "*

J & C Step 1

Big Book p. 44, par. 2 *"or to live on a spiritual basis "*

J & C Step 2

Big Book p. 44, par. 2 *"are not always easy alternatives to face. But it isn't so difficult. About half our original fellowship were of exactly that type. At first some of us tried to avoid the issue, hoping against hope we were not true alcoholics. But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life or else. Perhaps it is going to be that way with you. But cheer up, something like half of us thought we were atheists or agnostics. Our experience shows that you need not be disconcerted."*

J & C And I had to stop right here. And see what is my belief as far as this God thing is concerned? And today we find there is only one of three ways that you can believe as far as God is concerned.

One way is to be an atheist. Now an atheist says, "There is no God". Therefore they have no power greater than human power to turn to. The atheist would have to stand on their own two feet, run their own show. And I said "Charlie, are you an atheist?" I said "No". I've always believed in some kind of God, so I'm not an atheist.

I said, "Well then maybe you're an agnostic". So I had to go to the dictionary and look that word up. And like Joe said the word **agnostic means without knowledge**

An agnostic believes that there is a God. But since we've never tried to use God's power in our life, we've run our own show, stood on our two feet, we've never received God's power so we don't know that God exists. We believe in some kind of God but we don't really know whether that's true or not.

And I think that's what most of us are when we get here. Most of us get here with some belief in a God, but we have never turned to that God and we've been running our own show and standing on our own two feet and doing our own thing. Even though we believed in God, we acted as if we did not believe in Him. An agnostic is one without knowledge of God, just belief.

Now if you're an atheist or an agnostic, then the question becomes **"How do you become a true believer in God?"**

A true believer is one that knows that God exists, don't believe it, knows it.

A true believer is one who has experienced God's power in their life and God has given them whatever they need to have a successful life.

I don't think any of us get here as a true believer. Cause if we knew God and experienced God's power, then we wouldn't have to come to AA to solve our problem. Most of us come here as agnostics.

Now whether we be atheist or agnostic, the question becomes **how do you get from that stage to the stage of one who is a true believer and can receive God's power in our life.**

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Big Book p. 45, par. 1 *"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. "*

J & C You know if we wasn't powerless we wouldn't be here would we.

Big Book p. 45, par. 1 *"Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves. Obviously. But where and how were we to find this Power?"*

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. "

J & C It doesn't say which will enable you to solve it. Or will help you solve it. It says the main object is to enable you to find the Power greater than yourself and then that power will solve the problem. And I find interestingly enough from page 45 on in the big book Alcoholics Anonymous we don't talk about alcohol anymore. We're through with that.

We talk about one thing and one thing only. If you are powerless, whether you be atheist or agnostic, if you are powerless,

How do you find the power? And if you can find the power, then the power will solve the problem.

So right after lunch when we come back we're going to start looking at **How do we find that power?**

Ok we're going to go to page 46, in chapter We Agnostics. And the book says

Big Book p. 46, par 1 *"Yes, we of agnostic temperament have had these thoughts and experiences. Let us make haste to reassure you. We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.*

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. "

J & C You know my sponsor at the time, George, saw that I had a real problem with this idea about God and he asked me about it. And I said I am I'm having a hard time trying to understand. And he said, well I've noticed that. He said why don't you do something that helped him and maybe it would help me. He said why don't you go home tonight and write down on a piece of paper what you would like God to be laying aside all that stuff that you think that you know and just write down on that piece of paper what you would like God to be. And so I went home that night and I wrote down some things and I'm not going to tell you what it is, it's up to you. And I wrote down some things that I wanted God to be and I showed them to George and he looked at them and he said that's good Joe. You can begin with that. See I didn't know you could do that.

Down in the south you go to hell for making up your own God. It's true. You had to believe as they believed. You had to have faith in what they had faith in. If you didn't you was going to go to hell. But George gave me permission and I needed that permission to sit down and to say that I would like God to be these things. And he said that's good. You can start with that and you can begin with that. And that's exactly what I did. Where it says

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Big Book p. 46, par 2 *"Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. "*

J & C Now here is where we can cast aside the first old idea. The old idea that I had was that you had to believe as they believed. And they had me convinced that if you didn't believe as they believed there is no way that you're going to get anything good when it comes to God. So I was real pleased to find out that I can cast aside that old idea and then I can have my own conception of God.

And like we said yesterday or last night that I find I have never had any problem with my own conception of anything. And you let me start believing in God the way I want to then I've got an entirely different idea. An old idea cast aside replaced with a new idea begins right here. And the book says

Big Book p. 46, par 2 *"As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps. We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. It is open, we believe, to all men."*

J & C See all I had to quit doing was saying no, there is not, no and start seeking saying yes maybe and I started seeking. I said "George you mean I need to find God?" And he said "Joe, God's not lost." Didn't take me long to figure out who was lost. He said it's just like the book says **It's in the seeking it's not in the finding.**

All I had to do was seek. And you know, that's all this book is asking me to do and this chapter is asking me to seek with an open mind and to wonder and to think and eventually God will disclose himself to me. And that's exactly what's happened.

I was taught as a kid growing up that the way to God was a very narrow path, that if you strayed off either side of it you were going to get in to a hell of a shape. I was taught that God was very, very exclusive. That only those that believed, as they believed, would be able to make any contact with God. Those were old ideas. Now my book says

Big Book p. 46, par 2, cont. *"We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him. To us, the Realm of Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; never exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. "*

Old ideas cast aside replaced with some new ideas. Beginning to find this power greater than human power by changing of the old ideas to new ideas.

Big Book p. 47, par 1 *"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. "*

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

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Big Book p. 47, par 1, cont. *"At the start, this was all we needed to commence spiritual growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. Afterward, we found ourselves accepting many things which then seemed entirely out of reach. That was growth, but if we wished to grow we had to begin somewhere. So we used our own conception, however limited it was."*

And that was a beginning for me, I needed a beginning place and that's where I started.

Big Book p. 47, par 2 *"We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. --"Do I now believe, "*

J & C The agnostic has always believed in some kind of God.

Big Book p. 47, par 2, cont. *"or am I even willing to believe, "*

J & C The atheist can become willing to believe that there is some kind of God

Big Book p. 47, par 2, cont. *"that there is a Power greater than myself?" As soon as a man can say that he does believe, "*

J & C The agnostic

Big Book p. 47, par 2, cont. *"or is willing to believe, "*

J & C The atheist

Big Book p. 47, par 2, cont. *"we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.*"*

J & C Again they want to make real sure that we understand what they mean by those terms.

He says **It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.*** So the wonderfully effective spiritual structure we're building is the spiritual experience or the spiritual awakening.

And he said the cornerstone of that is to believe or to be willing to believe that there is power greater than human power. We referred to that once before. The foundation of that structure was step one, which is willingness. Now then he tells us the cornerstone of that structure, step two, believing. So we've already put two stones in place if we can say we're willing and yes we believe or we are willing to believe either one of the two. And he said

Big Book p. 47, par. 3 *"That was great news to us, for we had assumed we could not make use of spiritual principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe. "*

J & C And there has always been one of my great problems with this God thing. Faith indicates surety. Faith indicates knowledge. Faith indicates after the fact information.

And one of my problems has always been, the minister would say, "Son all you have to do is have faith and everything will be alright". Well I never could have faith because I had no knowledge of God. I didn't know for sure that God would do anything for me. The best I can possibly do is to start with belief. And there is a big difference between belief and faith, believe me there is.

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

A good example of that...let's say I moved into this area here and 3 or 4 months later I've got a problem with my automobile. I don't know a good mechanic anywhere in this area. But we'll say that you've lived here for a long time. And I assume you will know somebody so I come to you and I say, "Can you recommend a good mechanic for me?" And you say "Why sure. Take your car over there to John, he'll do you a good job and he'll charge you a reasonable price." Well I don't know whether that's true or not. The best I can do with that information is if I believe it strong enough, I'll take my car over there to John. And sure enough he does a good job; he charges me a reasonable price. When I leave there **I know** that he will do that. When I went there **I believed** that he would do that. Now six months from now I have trouble with my car again. I don't ask you or anybody else where to take it. I take it right back to John. This time I took it on faith took it on knowledge.

You can't start with faith; you can only start with belief.

And that's all we have to do. We either have to believe or we become willing to believe that there is a power greater than we are and we're on the road to spiritual recovery. We don't have to know anything. Thank God step two says we came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Didn't say we came to know. Didn't say we had faith in that, we just came to believe. And I came to believe based upon what I'd read in the book and what you told me. That there is a power greater than I am can restore me to sanity. I didn't know that I just believed that. And if I know that the beginning of this thing, the finding of the power is just to believe, or be willing to believe then the next thing I'm going to have know is what procedure am I going to follow in order to find that power. Let's go over to page 51 for just a moment.

Big Book p. 51, par. 1 *"This world of ours has made more material progress in the last century than in all the millenniums which went before. Almost everyone knows the reason. Students of ancient history tell us that the intellect of men in those days was equal to the best of today. Yet in ancient times, material progress was painfully slow. The spirit of modern scientific inquiry, research and invention was almost unknown. In the realm of the material, men's minds were fettered by superstition, tradition, and all sort of fixed ideas. "*

J & C And I used to wonder why it is that we today have cellular phones and TVs and automobiles and airplanes. Why those people a hundred years ago or two hundred years ago or five hundred years ago didn't have or invent those things. I thought we were just smarter than they were. But I've come to find out that they had the same intellect as we do. Intellect means the capacity to learn.

They had the capacity to learn as we do. But the one thing that kept them in those dark ages so to speak it was **superstition, tradition and all sorts of fixed ideas**

That's why I say I need an open mind more today than I've ever needed an open mind and I think we as a society have done that. Right here in the Northeast corner of the United States some 225 years ago or so people came over here for religious freedom. They wanted to practice a religion as they saw as they understood it. And as long as you agreed basically with their religion and you practiced your religion somewhat like they did you were OK. But if you had any thoughts or ideas that were different and you expressed those thoughts and ideas openly and it didn't agree with what they had and what they agreed with they would burn you at the stake as a witch. Right here in America they did that. So if you had any ideas like that you certainly didn't express them, you kept them to yourself.

So superstition, tradition and all sorts of fixed ideas kept people from growing.

And I think we as a country have gotten over that today. Our minds are open to many, many things.