

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #18

Step 4 Chapter 5 - How It Works

(Session26b - 00:03:42.6)

Good morning everyone. My name is Joe and I'm an alcoholic. And it's truly by God's grace and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous that I found in the book call Alcoholics Anonymous I'm sober today and for that I'm very, very thankful. And I've been sober ever since I quit drinking. And that was on November 3, 1973 and for that I'm truly thankful. And it's good to be here this morning isn't it? You guys have really been great this weekend. We really appreciate all the friendship and the friendliness that we've found her this weekend. It's been great. Made us feel real good and welcome. And I want to thank the committee again for all the hard work that they've done in putting this thing on and thank each and every one of you for being here. It's been a great weekend. Thank you.

Good morning everyone. My name is Charlie Parmley...lack of power was his dilemma...and I'm a very grateful recovering alcoholic this morning....because I'm a member of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and by the grace and the power that I found in the 12 step program of Alcoholics Anonymous I haven't found it necessary to take a drink in 10518 days today one day at a time and for this I am very grateful.

You guys look great this morning. Golly, not a resentment left in the whole bunch. Isn't that something? How many of you went back to where you were staying last night and worked on at least one resentment? Can I see your hands? Oh yah a bunch of you did. How many of you got rid of at least one resentment? Can I see your hands? Great. How many of you did we give a new resentment to yesterday afternoon? Can we see your hands? Pray for us. We need the prayers and you need the practice.

Oh I think I'll start out this morning with a little spiritual story, a little spiritual joke. Since it is Sunday morning.

This is a story about a new young priest. And he was so nervous at his first mass that he could barely speak. And before his second week in the pulpit he asked the Monsignor what he could do to relax himself. And the Monsignor said "Well next week before you do the mass" he said " why don't you put a little vodka in your water pitcher and after a few sips everything would probably be OK". Well sure enough the new young priest, before the next mass he put the vodka in the water pitcher and everything turned out just great. No embarrassment, could talk freely, no problems whatsoever. Well when he returned back to the rectory, he found a note from the Monsignor which said

#1 – Next time I suggest you sip at the water pitcher rather than gulp at it

#2 – There are 10 commandments not 12

#3 – There are 12 disciples not 10

#4 – David slew Goliath he didn't kick the shit of him

#5 – We do not refer to our Savior Jesus Christ and his apostles as J.C. and the boys

#6 – Next week there's a taffy pulling contest at St Peters not a peter pulling contest at St Taffy's

#7 – We do not refer to the cross as The Big T

#8 – Last but not least, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are not referred to as Big Daddy, Junior and the Spook

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

That's probably about as spiritual as we'll get this morning too. We went through a process yesterday afternoon, the first part of the inventory process. There we learn how to look at our resentments. To take an honest, truthful, moral inventory. And as we listed those resentments we begin to see the truth about them really. Now the first thing we saw in column 1 is how many resentments we really did have. How much that blocked us off from the sunlight of the spirit. The second thing we saw in column 2 is it's not those people or institutions we resent, it's what they've done to us that we actually resent. The third thing we found out in column 3, it's really not even what they've done to us, it's how we choose to react to a threat to one of our basic instincts of life which is going to determine whether we are resentful or not.

So just in filling out those three columns we've learned some very valuable information. Also we're able to see in the big book that resentments was an absolute waste of time. That whenever they're churning around in our heads we're pretty well paralyzed from doing anything worthwhile, and we find that if we honestly look at them, most of us have spent literally thousands and thousands of hours in resentments and as we look back at that time in our lives we can see where they never did do us any good. They never did straighten up a relationship with another human being. Never made us feel better, only made us feel worse. Never made us any money for sure. And as far as we can tell it's absolute wasted time. Now we also said that's not the worst thing about a resentment. The worst thing is it very effectively blocks us off from God. Blocked off from God we don't feel good. We begin to become insane.

We begin to think about taking a drink. The next thing you know we end up drunk all over again. And when we truthfully and honestly looked at those resentments we could really begin to see how other people have controlled and dominated us throughout our entire lifetime through those resentments.

Now we always thought that we had it under control. That we determined what we said and what we did. But we suddenly realized that we really have done nothing but react to others through our resentment toward them. That looked so stupid to us that about 95% of those resentments disappeared. The other 5% that were so deeply embedded we found through prayer that we could remove them also so we could be resentment free if we follow the procedure outlined in the big book. The real revealing thing is though, the amazing thing is that after we became resentment free God wouldn't allow another hole in our head it had to be replaced with something else. The only thing that could replace it was the opposite of the resentment. And where we used to feel resentment we now feel serenity, a little peace of mind, a little happiness, compassion, goodwill, love. Those are all God's thinking rather than our individual thinking. And we found that that came to us automatically. Those things had always been a part of us, we just never could use them before.

Now the resentments are gone and God's thinking automatically begins to replace the resentment and we're much less chance of getting drunk now than we were when we started the process. We went back to the resentment sheet and we looked at it from an entirely different angle now. We begin to look at it to see what had we done to set that thing in motion or what did we do, we had never looked at before. And in our fourth column we found that in almost all cases whatever the resentment was we ourselves did something to set it in motion. And we hurt other people, the retaliated, we resented, we played the resentment over and over and over, distorted the picture, finally transferred all blame to other people. A good practicing alcoholic has to be able to do that. We just couldn't live if we didn't have that ability.

So we really in the fourth column really did begin to look at the truth of the resentment to see the part that we had played. And in most cases we ourselves set the ball rolling. We looked in the fifth column to see the exact nature of that resentment. The resentment was the wrong, but what was the actual core of it or at the center of it?

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

And in the fifth column we found the type personality that we had developed through the years of living on self-will and living as a practicing alcoholic. And we found that just about every time that we had hurt anybody in the past it was either through selfishness or through dishonesty or because we were self-seeking frightened or through inconsideration of other people. And we begin to see in the fifth column that if we don't change those things were going to keep right on doing the same things in sobriety that we use to do when drinking. We're going to continue to hurt people, they're going to retaliate, and we're going to resent and eventually get drunk over it. And we begin to see in the fifth column the things that we will need to change in our personality if we want to live with peace of mind, serenity and happiness in the future.

We summed it up by saying we're in the process of doing the resentment part of step 4. In the fifth column we now had all the information we needed for steps 5,6 and 7. And then the names in the first column, those that we had harmed, they come off of there to be added to the list to be used for 8 and 9 at a later date. So we really ended up in this simple little inventory with all the information we needed for 4,5,6,7,8 and 9 resentment wise. Very positive thing took place. Resentments disappeared and they were replaced with patience, tolerance, compassion and goodwill. So there was nothing to be afraid of. There was nothing too complicated. There was not a list of dirt, filthy, nasty items, just a simple inventory.

Now we don't want to give you the impression that you can always be 100% free of resentments. You know God never gave us anything bad. It depends on what we do with things on whether they become bad or not. A resentment used right can be used for a worthwhile purpose. If somebody does something to me that threatens my self esteem, if it would cause me to look at me and see some things that I need to change and I go ahead and make those changes then that resentment can be used for a worthwhile purpose. For instance if we are living in a neighborhood. All the old houses are run down. Mines no worse than anybody else. They all need painting, they've got broken window screens and panes. And I sit on my front porch every evening after work and I rock and I rock and I'm very complacent about that situation. One day I look up though and some idiot has moved in across the street.

He's put there painting his house, fixing his window screens and windowpanes. Makes my house look bad. I resent the hell out him for doing that. I say, "Who in the hell is he moving in here and screwing up this whole neighborhood?" "Now if I use that resentment right it will cause me to look at my house and become a little bit ashamed of it. Next thing you know I paint my house, fix my window screens and windowpanes. My next door neighbor resents me for doing so. Next thing you know he fixes his house up and his neighbor resents him and after a while God's got the whole neighborhood cleaned up like it should have been in the first place. That's the proper use of a resentment. But we alcoholics won't use it that way. We'll sit on the front porch and we'll rock and we'll rock and we'll resent and we'll resent. Thirty days later we'll go over there at midnight and we'll burn his damn house down. We'll show him. So it really depends on what we do with resentments that determines whether they are going to be for bad or good. And if we use one rightly it's going to disappear anyhow.

The ones that kill us are those that we just leave in our head and they just fester and fester and fester and we get sicker and sicker until eventually it creates a real problem for us.

Joe?

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Step 4 - Fear Inventory Chapter 5 - How It Works

(Session 27 - 00:14:12)

J & C This morning we're going to talk about fears a bit, we're not going to psychoanalyze ourselves in any matter, we're simply going to do like the book suggested yesterday. We're going to find the facts, we're going to face the facts eventually through this process, and we're going to accept the facts as they really are truthfully. And it says also that when the spiritual malady is overcome we straighten out mentally and physically. The spiritual malady is not only my relationship with God, but my relationship with me, my mental attitudes and my relationship with other people. So that's another form of spiritual malady that I had. And Dr. Jung said we're going to have to look at our ideas, emotions and attitudes and that's what we're doing through this inventory process. Looking at ideas, emotions and attitudes and see where they came from. And if we will we'll go back now to page 18 and I'm going to read this little paragraph it tells my whole story in one little paragraph.

Big Book p. 18, par.1 "An illness of this sort, and we have come to believe it an illness, involves those about us in a way no other human sickness can. If a person has cancer all are sorry for him and no one is angry or hurt. But not so with the alcoholic illness, for with it there goes annihilation of all the things worthwhile in life. It engulfs all whose lives touch the sufferer's. It brings misunderstanding, fierce resentment, financial insecurity, disgusted friends and employers, warped lives of blameless children, sad wives and parents anyone can increase the list."

J & C In other words it's a family illness; it affects everybody in the family to some extent. And if you live with one of us very long you'll be affected by it in some manner for sure. And as I look back in my life to see where these ideas, emotions and attitudes that would become the guiding force of my life started way, way back.

My dad was an alcoholic I know that today. He had an obsession to drink and my mother had an obsession to see that he didn't drink and I grew up in that. My dad was a farmer there in Oklahoma and he couldn't make it there real well there during the Depression and they came to California and eventually we didn't fit in real good out here in that time. Later on we fit in real good. But we moved back to Oklahoma, back to West Tulsa, Oklahoma that's we're all the poor people lived and the menial labor people lived and that's where we lived. My dad got a job as an iceman. Worked six days a week carrying ice to the people's homes, backbreaking work. Saturday he would come home after work and he would stop by the bootlegger and pick up a half-pint or pint of that rotgut whiskey and had a little drink. And he needed a drink for sure. My mother saw that fifty cents or a dollar going for whiskey that could have gone for these five kids that she had and she was fearful too and she raised hell with him and he raised hell with her and I grew up in this, that's the way I grew up. And we know it's a progressive illness this alcoholism and my family got progressively worse. My dad got to be physically and verbally abusive to my mother and us children and as time went by he would put out a gun once in a while or a knife and wave it around the house and threaten my mother with it. And from time to time when I was a young fellow and he would take my mother out and would tell us before he left, boys I'm going to kill your mom this weekend, and they'd be gone. And I'm sitting at home, seven or eight years old and I'm growing up in this and it affected me emotionally in lots of manners. Later on his drinking got to be so bad my mother had to have him committed to the Eastern St. Hospital of Bonita, which is our local nut house and they didn't have any treatment centers for alcoholics at that time so they put him in the criminally insane ward. And that's what they did with alcoholics of our type in those days 1949, 50, 51.

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He was committed there till he got well, think about that. My dad was there for three years and seven months and thirteen days and he was an alcoholic in the criminally insane ward. And my brother and I used to hitchhike up there about seventy miles and take a couple of dollars and a carton of cigarettes to see him and we'd go into the criminally insane ward and I'd see things in there that I can't describe that you're not ever supposed to see what they did with people in those days. And some of the ideas, emotions and attitudes began to form in my life right around there and on the way home sometimes I would think this, If God, you got to blame it on somebody, if God is going to do this to me then to hell with God. And I'll never be calling on him any more thank you. And that's the way I lived my life. Another thought came to my was this. If it hurts this much to love people I'm not going to love anybody anymore either, quit loving people, it hurts too much. So I began to push people out of my life. And another thought came to me was this, if anything good is going to happen in my life it's going to happen because I alone without any help made it that way. A totally selfish and self-centered attitude, but I didn't know that. I thought those were very brave attitudes on my part, and I thought that way for a long time. And I'm trying to say it's not very good coping skills we have here. They put you in jail for some of these ideas that you have, and they divorce you for those kinds of things. I see people today who are very loud and profane, verbally abusive, cussing, raising cane everywhere, and I know exactly what's wrong with them, they're scared to death. Cause that's exactly the way I was and if you threatened me in any manner I would jump right in your face. I did that; I did that over here across the river in Arizona one time. They gave me seven to fifteen for that, told me never to come over there again, but I didn't... I went back one time, well anyhow, just briefly. We went to Flagstaff and did a Big Book Study and he was looking behind him all the time. They told me never to come back and I meant it, when I left there I meant never to come back.

What I am trying to tell you is that I didn't need God, I didn't need other people, I just needed me, and that's the way I lived my life way after I got into Alcoholics Anonymous. So now let's go back to p. 67. There again we're not trying to psychoanalyze ourselves. I found the facts, I accepted the facts and I looked at the facts and I could see where I'd come from.

Big Book p. 67, last par. "Notice that the word 'fear' is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife."

J & C Six times along that column (3rd column, example on p. 65)

Big Book p. 67, last par., line 3 "This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve."

J & C You know you do the crime, you do the time. That's the way that is.

Big Book p. 67, last par., line 7 "But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?"

J & C You see I did that myself, to me cause I didn't know any better.

Big Book p. 67, last par., line 8 "Sometimes we think fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble.

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them.

Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse."

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group
Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

J & C So what we're going to do here this morning is basically about what we did with resentment. We have a little list here; it's a review of our fears. And we're simply going to

- (a) look at our fears,
- (b) where they come from - the ideas, emotions and attitudes behind them and
- (c) what we're fearful of.

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group
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