

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #19

Step 4 – Chapter 5 How It Works

(Session 28 - 00: 0:13:48)

J & C Now let's go the fourth column.

We go to the fourth column and we try to put out of our minds all these things that happened so far and we write down "What did I do?" What did I do to set the ball rolling? Did I do the crime to do the time? Yes I did that. When my wife was going to divorce me and I was fearful of it, what did I do? What were some of the things that I did? Well I was uncaring for her, I didn't care about her. Didn't consider her in any manner, in any way. And therefore I was afraid and I didn't know that. See I really did know that I was afraid of those things.

It told us way back in step 3 that we invariably find that we've made decisions based on self, which later placed us in a position to be hurt. And we made decisions trying to satisfy our basic instincts of life and running on self-will those basic instincts become insatiable things, we never get enough to satisfy them, and we are continually doing things that end up hurting and harming and creating other people. Then we've got to be scared to death of what they're going to do whenever they catch us. And even if they don't catch us, the guilt and the remorse eats us up here just like with resentments. So we begin to look at the part we played and we find that we did the same thing with fears that we did with resentments. As we play them over and over and over in our head, we actually distorted the picture and the fears that we have in our head today are not true. Oh they started on truth but they are no longer true. You see that's one of the definitions of one of those wrongs

fear is incorrect believing

And if we carefully look at each one of these fears we're going to find that they are absolutely wrong. They started with truth, we distorted the picture, and once again we've used them to transfer blame to others so we don't ever have to look at ourselves. Same identical thing as with resentments.

Now let's look into the fifth column. In the fifth column I simply looked down in these instances.

Was I selfish in those instances, in those particular items? Yes I was very selfish. Because I was so fearful I was selfish. I was afraid I was going to lose things that I already had or I was afraid I wasn't going to get some things that I wanted.

Was I dishonest? Yes I was dishonest. I took things from other people that didn't belong to me. And I was very dishonest. It seemed to me that to be successful in any manner was OK with me. So I was an extremely dishonest person and I certainly didn't know that particularly.

And then I was self-seeking and frightened and inconsiderate of other people for sure. Cause I wanted what I wanted when I wanted it and I didn't make a damn how I got it was the way I looked at my life. And if you got in my way, you just shouldn't have. So I was a very selfish, self-seeking, frightened and inconsiderate individual and I did not know that.

You know it's absolutely a life living on hell whenever you're scared to death that you're not going to get something that you really do want it. And then through dishonesty you go ahead and get it. And then you've got to be scared to death of whatever they're going to do you whenever they catch you. And even if they don't get you, the guilt and the remorse eats you up. And our lives really do become an absolute living hell in trying to satisfy these basic instincts of life and we just really drive ourselves absolutely dingy until we get an opportunity to really truthfully look at these things.

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Now out there in that fifth column once again we see the exact nature of the wrong. The fears are what's wrong because we find out most of them are incorrect. They're what block us off from God. But what's the actual truth behind them?

Well if we wasn't so selfish, if we wasn't so dishonest, if we were not so self-seeking, frightened, and inconsiderate we wouldn't have to experience near as much fear as we do.

But I'll guarantee you if I stay selfish, dishonest, self-seeking, frightened and inconsiderate, the same old things are going to drive me, I'm going to do the same old things I've always done. Fear, guilt, remorse is going to absolutely eat me up. Sooner or later it blocks me off from God, it causes me to get drunk. So once again what we're doing here in this little inventory sheet. We are doing step 4. This is the fear part of it.

Out in this fifth column we see the exact nature of the wrong for step 5, the defects for step 6, the shortcomings that we're going to ask God to take away in step 7, and then once again many of the names over here in column 1 will be people and institutions we've harmed and we're scared to death of what they're going to do whenever they catch us.

So those names will come off of column 1, they'll be added to the sheet to be used later on for steps 8 and 9. We got some off the resentment sheet; we got some off of the fear sheet also. And one thing that absolutely amazed me is that when I really looked at this truthfully is I begin to see a lot of the names, same names appearing on the fear sheet that I had on the resentment sheet. I had never tied that together in my head before. Barbara was on both sheets. I resented her and I certainly feared her. And I'm still a little bit afraid of that lady today. If she ever finds out everything that I was doing about 30 years ago, she's probably going to file for divorce again. I don't know. I resented the Internal Revenue Service and I feared the Internal Revenue Service. They were also on those sheets and I never really had tied that together in my head.

Now if you think resentments look stupid in your head, wait till you get these things down on paper about fears. Now fears look awful good in your head. But when you get them down on a sheet of paper they really do look double dumb when you see the truth about them. Resentments look stupid; hell fears look even worse than that. And they look so dumb that about 95% of them are going to disappear anyhow when you see the truth about them. Once again there is going to be about 1,2,3,4 or 5 that's been embedded in our minds so deeply that we're probably going to have a little help in order to get rid of some of those. We now come to the second prayer in the big book on step 4 regarding fears.

You know when I prayed for those people that I resented my ideas, emotions and attitudes towards them changed. They didn't change but I did. Now prior to this idea about these fears, my whole attitude and outlook upon life was involved in these fears. And I had fears in every area of my life and didn't know it, because I hadn't had a God in my life either. But I took step 3 and I've got God in my life and now I'm on a different basis. And the book says.

Big Book p. 68, par. 2

"Perhaps there is a better way, we think so. For we are now on a different basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.

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We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear."

J & C And you know as I look back at that, my sponsor told me in those early days, he said the most important thing about prayer, the 2 most important things about prayer. One of them is to start and the other one is to continue. And as I look back over my life I can see that every time I prayed I change just a minute amount, just hardly noticeable. The next time I prayed it was just a little bit more. And the next time I prayed it was just a little bit more. And as time goes by I can see a real reliance upon God today in my life. It wasn't that way in the beginning. But when I started trusting and relying upon God rather than myself then those fears begin to come away from me. They weren't as intense as they had been. And they begin to get in the area where God intended for them to be. And at once I commenced to outgrow these fears.

You know we hear always about the promises on page 83-84. We never hear about the promises that are spread throughout the entire book. And I think one of the greatest promises to be found anywhere in the book is what Joe just read.

We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow that fear.

Now we can take these deep-seated fears just like deep-seated resentments. Through prayer on a daily basis, asking God to take this particular fear away from me, direct my attention to what he would have me be instead of that and at once I commence to outgrow that fear. And over a period of days as he directs my attention to what he would have me be and I try to be that, as I ask him to take that fear away, some morning I wake up and that fear is gone. It really, really does work. And I think the reason that it really works is that when we are asking God to take it away and direct our attention to what he would have us be, then that's one of the great expressions of courage and faith that we human beings can have.

Courage, faith and fear will not exist on the same plain

The fear will be replaced by the courage to do the opposite of that fear and as we begin to change it will be replaced by faith that God really can do these things. And slowly we can remove those fears too.

Now just think, this file cabinet up here in my head that was filled with fears has now been emptied out. That damaged and unsalable goods called fear is gone at least to the level that God intends for it to be. Once again, God's not going to allow another hole in my head. The fears, if they disappear, they've got to be replaced with the opposite. And the opposite will be faith and courage, the opposite of the fear itself. I found out I didn't have to go to any other fellowships or read any other books to get faith and courage. If God dwells within me, that's always been a part of my makeup, I just never could use it before.

In my chase for money, power, prestige and sex and in my desire to fulfill the basic instincts of life, in my worries in that I wouldn't get what I want and I'd lose what I've got or they're going to catch me at it, faith and courage had to be repressed and I had to operate on that fear level. But now that the fear is gone, faith and courage automatically comes to the surface. Another positive happening. Two thirds of my store now has some peace of mind, serenity and happiness in them and I'm in much less chance of drinking now than I was before I started the inventory process. You see we don't have to wait till step 12 to get

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something good out of this. Every step brings a positive result. There's nothing negative about anything in our program, period.

Now also just like with resentment, knowing that fears block you off from God, and that they might get you drunk, if you've got a fear that you don't want to turn loose of, you'd better look at it very, very closely. Because we can also use fear to rationalize and justify not doing something we really would like to do or just as importantly we can use it to justify continuing to do things that we know we shouldn't be doing. And if we've got one of those and we don't want to get rid of it, we'd better look at it very, very closely. Let me give you an example of how you can use fear to rationalize and justify.

How many of you here this morning, and please be truthful with me, how many of you would really like to go back to school and finish your education? Could I see your hands? Oh my God, about half of you at least. Now I'm going to ask you another question. How many of you really do intend to do that? Oh about half of those hands went up this time. I wonder why. Nothing in the world but fear.

Fear that we won't measure up.

Fear of failure.

Fear of hard work.

Actually keeps us from doing things that we really would like to do. Now if we can ask God to take that away and direct our attention to what he would have us be instead then every one of you that wants to go back to school will end up doing it. But until that fear is gone it's going to drive most of us away and keep us away. We use it to rationalize, justify just like we did with resentments. So if we've got one of those, let's look at that closely too.

All my life, I loved to work with my hands, all my life I wanted to be able to build a set of kitchen cabinets. Never would do it because I knew there would be a lot of mistakes, people would laugh and I would be embarrassed. Now after I worked the program for quite some time, one time I got the courage to build a set of kitchen cabinets. Now they don't look very good. There's a lot of mistakes and people laugh at it but I really don't give a damn. It don't bother me anymore see. So we can overcome these things with God's help. It's amazing what we can do with these things.

Step 4 – Chapter 5 How It Works

(Session 29 - 00:18:39)

J & C OK. Bottom of page 68.

Big Book p. 68, par. 4

"Now about sex."

J & C We're getting ready now to look at the storeroom back here that's filled with guilt and remorse and it seems as though we human beings hurt each other in the sexual area probably faster and easier than we do in any other way. And I think there's a reason for that. You know the other animals here on earth, they have a sexual urge just like we do so that they can and will reproduce themselves. But the difference between their sex life and ours is simply that they don't have this thing called self-will. Most of the other animals here on earth, they don't really have any choice in their sex life. When it comes time for them to reproduce themselves, God usually signifies that by some physical change in the female of the species. The male senses that change, prepares himself, the two join together and it's kind of like bang, bang thank you ma'am. And when it's over with they normally go their separate ways. Not always, but usually they do.

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Now they didn't think about having sex before they had it. And they didn't think about having sex while they were having it. They couldn't decide when they were going to do it. God made that decision for them. They usually can't decide who they're going to do it with. They can't decide whether they're going to do it with one or more partners. They can't decide how many times they're going to do it. And they can't even decide what position they're going to do it in. So therefore you see very few sexual problems amongst the other animals here on earth. I've never seen a cow on a psychiatrist's couch yet talking about sexual dysfunction. They just don't have those kinds of problems.

We human beings are a little bit different. You see God gives us this thing called self-will. And we can make choices about our sex lives. We can have sex any day of the year that we wish to. We can decide who we are going to have sex with. We can decide whether we're going to have it with one or more partners. We can decide how many times we're going to do it providing we're physically capable of doing so. We can even decide what position we're going to do it in. They tell me there is something like 64 different positions a human being can have sex in. I have no idea what they are. []. And 2 of those damn near killed me. I'm not sure I'm going back to them. So what we are going to look at for just a few minutes this morning is not so much as to how we do sex but as to how we think about sex. Cause how we think about it determines how we're going to do it. And that determines whether we are going to hurt other people or not. And that determines whether we're going to have to be eaten up with fear, guilt and remorse associated with our sex lives. So we are going to look at just a few minutes about how we think about sex.

Big Book p. 68, par. 4 cont. *"Many of us needed an overhauling there. "*

J & C Now you older fellows don't get your hopes up. We're talking about mental not physical.

Big Book p. 68, par. 4 cont. *"But above all, we tried to be sensible on this question. It's so easy to get way off the track. Here we find human opinions running to extremes -- absurd extremes, perhaps. One set of voices cry that sex is a lust of our lower nature, a base necessity of procreation."*

J & C I've heard them all my life. They're the ones that say sex is a dirty thing. You ought to do it one time in one position with one person only. The only reason to do it is to reproduce yourself. And if you enjoy it it's a sinful thing. I've heard them as far back as I can remember. They are to the extremes on one side.

Big Book p. 69 *"Then we have the voices who cry for sex and more sex; who bewail the institution of marriage; who think that most of the troubles of the race are traceable to sex causes. They think we do not have enough of it, or that it isn't the right kind. They see its significance everywhere. "*

J & C Then you hear them today. They're the ones who say that you ought to be able to have sex anytime you want to, anywhere you want to with anybody you want to as many times as you want to. You ought to be able to enjoy it every time and if you don't there must be something wrong with you. And maybe they call that the sexual revolution. Main thing I see wrong with it is it happened 25 years too late for me to participate in it. I know that.

Big Book p. 69, cont. *"One school would allow man no flavor for his fare and the other would have us all on a straight pepper diet. We want to stay out of this controversy. We do not want to be the arbiter of*

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anyone's sex conduct. We all have sex problems. We'd hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do about them?"

J & C And I read that last statement with great relief. Because I knew that this book was getting ready to condemn me for what I had been in the past. I knew it was getting ready to tell me what I was going to have to do in the future. And I'd already made up my mind that I wasn't going to pay any attention to it at all. And I was relieved to find out that we are not going to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct. We simply are not going to get into that question. Now this book is meant to be helpful to anybody, anywhere. And we start trying to tell people how they are going to have to conduct their sex lives. We start condemning them for what they've done in the past and surely, surely we're going to alienate people. Besides that, what's sexually acceptable in one part of the world may not be acceptable at all in another part of the world.

So we simply are not going to get into that question. What we are going to see is a simple little way to review our own past sex conduct. See what we've been doing with it. See if perhaps we've been using it for the wrong purposes in some cases. Look at those people we've hurt by it. Then try to shape a sex life of the future where we can still engage in it and enjoy it yet at the same time not hurt other people. And if we don't do something about it we continue to hurt other people and feel the fear, guilt and remorse. Sooner or later it will block us off from God and we end up getting drunk over it. Very simple process. Joe.

Certainly I'm not going to be the arbiter of anyone's sex conduct and I needed an overhauling in that area when I arrived at Alcoholics Anonymous. And again we're going to look at the ideas, emotions and attitudes behind these sexual conducts that I had. And I look back in my life and when I was about 12 or 13 years old I got to thinking about this a lot, I mean a lot. Almost gave me brain damage from thinking about it. So I went to my Mom and I said "Mom"...cause of course my Dads in the nut house. I can't be talking to him. So I went to my Mom and I said "Mom, I've been thinking about this sex thing". And she said "Oh my God Benny Joe". Scared her to death. That's my name, Benny Joe. "Oh my God Benny Joe. That's not a good thing to be thinking about. In fact it's a dirty filthy rotten thing to be thinking about." She said. "And you ought to save it for the one you love." Think about that. And she said the only time you are supposed to have sex is when you want to have children. Well let's see she had five children, she had sex five times I figured. Well no wonder my Dad was in the nut house. But somehow I just didn't believe what she was telling me. And we had sex education when I went to school too, but they called it recess. And also in West Tulsa, Oklahoma there was a place called The Jenkins Café and every day and every evening in front of The Jenkins Café there was a gathering of very wise intelligent, experienced men and women of about 15 and 16 years old. And they were more than glad to share with you all they knew about sex. And some of those guys told me that they were having sex with 2 or 3 different partners a night they said. Sometimes they were having sex as many as 10 times a night they said. And you know the fallacy of all that is I tried to live up to that because that's what I thought. I never could but I tried. And I was sober 2 or 3 years in Alcoholics Anonymous before I figured out they were lying to me. At least I hope they were lying. You'd better hope they were lying to you. So certainly I needed an overhauling there. When I got here I had the spiritual knowledge of a 7 or 8 year old boy. I had the coping skills of an 8 or 9 year old boy. And I had the sexual knowledge of a 12 or 13 year old boy.

Do you think I needed overhauling in all those areas? How many of you got your sex information pretty much the way I did? I needed to sit down and look at this didn't I? You know I remember the very first time I ever had sex. I was very selfish and self-centred and dishonest and self-seeking. And I was also alone. That's why he's wearing glasses today too. Every time we say that, 2 or 3 of you guys whip your glasses off and put them in your pocket. And gals.

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OK let's look at the next paragraph now very carefully. We're going to see here the same set of instructions that we used, to look at sex, that we had for resentments. Only difference here is that they are worded a little differently. Which is Bill's way of doing things.

Big Book p. 69, par. 1

"We reviewed our own conduct over the years past. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate? Whom had we hurt? Did we unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness? Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead? We got this all down on paper and looked at it."

J & C So once again we made up a little sheet to avoid any confusion and it looks just about exactly like the resentment sheet except we call it a review of our own sex conduct. And in this little sheet a review of our own sex conduct we have the same 5 columns.

Now I doubt that there is anybody in this room this morning that ever hurt anybody in the sexual area that we don't remember just exactly who that is. That seems to be a form of knowledge that we all have.

There might be some question as to what do we do to hurt people in a sexual area. Well certainly we hurt them in many different ways. For instance, if I'm in a married relationship and I go outside of that relationship and I have sex out there and my wife finds out about it. Then surely I've created a problem for her, if not physically then at least emotionally. If that sexual escapade creates a trouble between my wife and I, there are children in my home, and then I've hurt my children also by the same sexual escapade. If the lady I had sex with out there, if it becomes common knowledge, I've hurt her too. If she has a husband and children I've hurt them also. You know, one sex act could many, many different people.

I think sometimes we hurt people in a sexual area by demanding more than our fair share.

Maybe our partner isn't too keen about having sex every time we want to. Rather than consider their needs, wants and desires, we selfishly demand that they have sex with us when they really don't want to. Surely that creates a problem for them, if not physically at least emotionally.

I think sometimes we hurt people in a sexual area by demanding that they do things with us physically sexually that they really don't want to do. And once again rather than consider their needs and wants we selfishly demand those things. Surely we create a problem for them, if not physically at least emotionally.

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I think sometimes we hurt people in a sexual area just by withholding sex. Maybe we're not too keen to have sex every time our partner wants to and rather than consider their needs and wants we selfishly withhold when perhaps we should give in a little more often. I think we hurt many people in many different ways and we pretty well know what they are.

Column 1 – we list their names.

Column 2 – what did I do to hurt them?

Column 3 – what part of self is affected?

Now you would think that if I hurt anybody in a sexual area that it would be caused by the sex instinct. And probably part of the time that's true. Sometimes in order to get the physical the emotional gratification that comes at the moment of successful completion of the sex act, maybe I'm doing the wrong thing at the wrong time with the wrong person because of the sex instinct. But I think if we will carefully review each situation we're going to find that usually the other 2 instincts are involved just as much as sex and in many cases even more so and sometimes sex really doesn't have a hell of a lot to do with it.

Now I'm going to express an opinion. And I want to make sure that everybody understands that this is my opinion. It's not AA's opinion, not Joe's, not anybody else's, just mine. Today I am convinced that God gave us the sex urge so that we could reproduce ourselves. I'm also convinced he made it a very enjoyable thing so we would do so. I don't think you and I would do the kind of work involved in sex if we didn't get something out of it.

Now if we're doing sex for purposes other than reproduction or enjoyment then we might be doing sex for purposes other than what God intended.

For instance, we boys found that at a very early age that you can use sex to build your self-esteem. After all, the more members of the opposite sex you could attract to yourself the greater man you really are, we thought. Now we boys, I don't know what you girls called it, but we boys called it John Wayne-ism. Joe said Jane Wayne. Some of you girls tell me that you used sex for the same purposes. Now if that's what we're using sex for that has nothing to do with reproduction. Really has nothing to do with enjoyment. That's to fulfill a part of the social instinct and sex really doesn't have a hell of a lot to do with it.

Sometimes we use sex to buy a personal relationship. Maybe we're just lonesome. Maybe we just want somebody to pay attention to us. And we found out a long time ago we can give sex and buy back a personal relationship. Now that's not to reproduce, that's not to enjoy. That's also to fulfill a part of the social instinct.

Sometimes we use sex to buy material security. Maybe we're in a sexual situation we really would rather not even be in but we've become so overly dependent upon another human being for our material well being that we give sex to buy back material wellbeing. Has nothing to do with reproduction or enjoyment. That's to fulfill the security instinct.

Sometimes we use sex to get even with another human being. Maybe were in a relationship and our partner has gone out and done something they shouldn't have done and it infuriates the hell out of us we say we'll show them and we'll go out and we'll do exactly the same thing. Fallacy in it is that after we've done it we can't afford to tell them we did it.

But certainly we didn't use sex there to reproduce nor to enjoy. We used it to get even with another human being. Sex really doesn't have a hell of a lot to do with that.

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You know sometimes we use sex to force our will on another human being. Maybe our partner isn't doing what we think they ought to do and we say we'll show them. We'll just cut them off at the pass. We won't let them have any sex until they come around to our way of thinking. Now we boys aren't too good at that. We only last 2 days at the most. You girls have honed it to perfection. You know exactly how to do that. And I don't blame you I would use it to for that. That has nothing to do with reproduction or enjoyment. That's to force our will on another human being.

I was absolutely amazed as I filled out that third column to see what I had actually been using sex for. Two things happened to me almost automatically. As I filled out the third column, a lot of my guilt began to disappear. I thought I was just a dirty rotten no good SOB. But I found out that I used sex for purposes other than what God intended. Not because I'm a bad human being, but because I'm a sick human being in those areas. And I needed that sex to build the personal relationships and etc. And when I saw that a lot of guilt began to disappear. Tell you another thing that started to happen to me in column 3. I begin to get a handle on this sex thing. You see I always thought I was over sexed and that caused me to do those things. But in column 3 I found out hell I'm not over sexed I'm under secure.

And I used sex to build my security and to build my self-esteem. And when I saw what I was doing with sex it began to look pretty stupid to do those things. And a lot of that desire to go did at the wrong time at the wrong place with the wrong people began to disappear and I started to get a handle on the sex thing right here in the third column. I think it's one of the greatest things that we can do for ourselves. Especially we men. We tend to use sex to build self-esteem. And sex doesn't really have anything to do with it. We tend to use it to build our self-esteem. And when I saw that was what I was doing with it then the desire to go do it became less and less.