

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #2

The History Behind the Big Book - Forward to the Second Edition

(Session02a - 10:38.)

Big Book, p. xvi, line 8

“This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success.”

J & C You know we always give credit to Bill and Bob and the first one hundred, which rightly we should. But if we were to go back and think about that summer of 1935 these guys really, they didn't have much idea about what they were doing. They had found a few simple things that had worked for them. And they would try this on many, many different people that summer. And if it worked then they would keep it and if something didn't work they might discard that, learning as they went through that summer working with people. I know one of Dr. Bob's favorite things was to fill them up with sauerkraut juice mixed with honey. He knew that there was vitamins in that sauerkraut juice that would help the body, and of course the honey was a form of energy. And they tried that amongst many a different things. And every once in a while, one of these guys would fall over dead. I can almost see Bill turn to Bob and say, oh shit, let's don't do that again. I think maybe we ought to give credit to those they failed with that summer too. They probably learned more from their failures than they did from their successes.

Big Book p. xvii, line 11

“When the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first A.A. group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time.”

J & C You know this little group of alcoholics that was going to the Oxford Group; you know they were having troubles with the Oxford Group because the Oxford Groups had four absolutes. And the drunks were having trouble being absolutely anything, as we well know, they couldn't practice that, and it seemed like that these drunks liked to stand off in the corner someplace and drink coffee and smoke cigarettes and tell stories, not necessarily mix in with the other Oxford Group meeting members, so they began to call them the Drunk Squad of the Oxford Group. And that's what they liked, to separate themselves from the normal Oxford Group members.

Big Book p. xvii, par 3

“A second small group had promptly taken shape at New York.”

J & C When Bill went back to New York City, he began to apply there what he had learned in Akron. Instead of talking about spirituality, he talked to the new people there about the **exact** nature of the illness and sure enough he got their attention. Some of them began to respond and a second little group started in New York City. And besides there were scattered alcoholics who had picked up the basic ideas in Akron or New York and were trying to form A.A. groups in other cities.

Big Book p. xvii, line 19

“By late 1937, the number of members having substantial sobriety time behind them was sufficient to convince the membership that a new light had entered the dark world of the Alcoholic.”

J & C In the summer of 1937 Bill was back in Akron, again on a business venture, and he decided to go by and see Dr. Bob and see how things were going in Akron. And they sat down in Dr. Bob's kitchen and they counted the number of people they knew that were staying sober, based on these three little pieces of information, and they found approximately 40 people sober.

And I think it's the first time that they really began to realize; maybe we really have found the answer to this thing called alcoholism. If we've found the answer then we need to get it to as many alcoholics as we

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possibly can. So the question immediately becomes well what's the best way to do that and maybe this is the beginning of the group conscious, cause Bill and Bob decided they didn't want to make that decision themselves, it was too important. And they called a meeting of the Oxford Group there in Akron and at that meeting that night there was eighteen people there, some alcoholic, some non-alcoholic, and the topic of conversation was, how can we best carry this message of recovery to the greatest number of people. Now they decided that night to do three things.

(1) In those days you could hardly get an alcoholic in a hospital for detoxification. Any doctor that put one in there had to lie about their condition. Alcoholism wasn't very popular in the 1930's, that's for sure. So they decided, now remember this is in the midst of the depression now in 1932, nobody has a dime hardly at all, and they decided what they needed to do was to build a chain of hospitals stretching all the way across the United States where any alcoholic that needed it would be able to have detoxification. I would assume Dr. Bob was going to be the head doctor.

(2) They also felt that this little message of recovery they had was so vital that not everybody could be entrusted with carrying it correctly. So they decided they needed to hire a group of individuals, train them and you know let them spread out across the United States more or less as missionaries to carry this message of recovery. I would assume Bill Wilson was going to be the head missionary too.

(3) And then they said you know the Oxford Groups have written a lot of books, spiritual in nature and they've been very popular. Back in the 1930's people read a lot of books, this was in the days before television. They're really was a time before television, believe me there was. And they felt that if they could come up with a book on alcoholism, what it is, and the solution to it and a way to bring that about.

The first comprehensive book on alcoholism the world had ever seen, that then surely this book would become one of the world's greatest best sellers, and they can take the profits from the book and build the hospitals and train the missionaries.

That was one reason behind the book. But I think

the main reason behind the book was that they had already noticed
carrying this message one on one, one person to another
that it already had begun to be changed.

And you know how people are, when we hear something good well we like to repeat it. But we'll usually add just a little bit to it, and then the next one will add a little more, and a little more, and a little more, and after a little while it doesn't resemble the first thing. And they said

what we really need to do is take these three pieces of information about
the problem, the solution and a program of action
put it down in a written form where it would no longer be changed, no longer be garbled,
and any alcoholic anywhere in the world in the future would have this same information,
it would be pure.

And they made the decision that night to write the Big Book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". Now thank God only one of the three things they decided that night came true. They never did get to build the hospitals because the book didn't make very much money in the beginning. They didn't get to hire and train the missionaries. But they did get to write the book. (p. xvii, line 25).

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Big Book p.. xvii, line 19 *“This determination bore fruit in the spring of 1939 by the publication of this volume. The membership had then reached about 100 men and women.”*

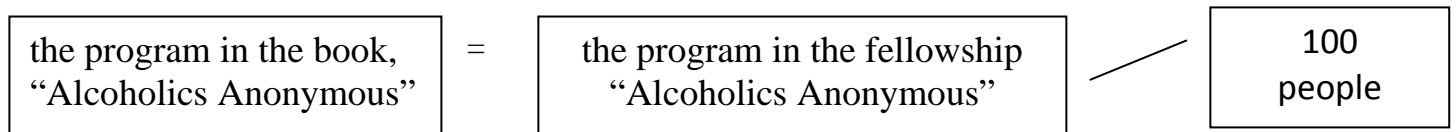
J & C And after they wrote the book they sat down one night at a meeting and they were trying to determine what they were going to call the book. They needed a title for the book so someone said, well let's call it “The Way Out”, that sounds like a pretty good name for a book. They did some research on that some later and they found out there were some 10 or 12 other books called “The Way Out”, so they discarded that. Somebody else suggested, well let's call it, “Comes the Dawn”, now that sounds like a pretty good title for a book, and they discussed that a while and kicked that around and decided not to do that. Somebody said, let's call it “A Hundred Men”, now that really sounds like a good name for a book. Well then a woman joined the group and they couldn't call it “A Hundred Men and A Women”, so they discarded that idea.

Bill suggested, hey let's call it “The Bill W. Movement”, they discussed that about 5 minutes and kicked that out. And then one evening someone suggested, that we're alcoholics and we want to remain anonymous, how about “Anonymous Alcoholics”, or “Alcoholics Anonymous”, that caught on. And that's what they called the book, “Alcoholics Anonymous”. And the first “Alcoholics Anonymous” that the world had ever seen was a book called “Alcoholics Anonymous”. It says here,

Big Book p. xvii, line 27 *“The fledgling society (this drunk squad of the Oxford Group), “... which had been nameless now began to be called Alcoholics Anonymous, from the title of its own book..”*

J & C So we have two Alcoholics Anonymous don't we. We have a book entitled, “Alcoholics Anonymous”, and then we have a fellowship entitled “Alcoholics Anonymous”. Two A.A.'s and we still have that today. And I think this is very important for us to think about. This group of people who had been nameless, they had been known as the Drunk Squad of the Oxford Groups, wrote a book and in that book they put their program of recovery and they called the book, “Alcoholics Anonymous”. And after the book was published they then decided to call themselves “Alcoholics Anonymous”.

Now in 1939,



were exactly the same.

The book then began to go out across the United States and the first person out here in California got a copy of this book.

Read it, studied it, did what it said, recovered from alcoholism
started a group called “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”.

The first person in Arkansas got a copy of this book.

Read it, studied it, did what it said, recovered
started a group called “*Alcoholics Anonymous*”.

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Now the growth of the fellowship began to come from the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Now as the fellowship began to grow and get bigger and bigger and bigger, they began to notice something that the first 100 didn't have. They began to notice the great power of a fellowship of people who had escaped from a common problem. Now the first one hundred didn't have that; they only had one hundred people period.

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But the fellowship, as it grew and got bigger and bigger and bigger they began to experience the power of fellowship, they then began to question the need for the severity of the program in the book. And they said;

Do you mean that we really have to turn ALL of our will and our life over to the care of God, as we understand him?

Can we give him the drinking and keep the rest?

Do you mean we are going to have to share ALL of our life story with another human being?

Hell God already knows about it, we know about it, why tell somebody else?

They began to say you mean we have to have God remove ALL of our character defects?

Hell we won't have any personality left if he does!

And they began to talk about, do you mean we have to make amends to ALL those people we've harmed? And they began to say such things as, well maybe we don't need to do every bit of that.

Maybe me could take some of it, and leave some of it?

Maybe we can do it cafeteria style?

Pick what we want, and leave that that we don't want?

And along about that time came the great advent of the treatment centers. Now please don't get us wrong, we have nothing against the treatment center. They serve a worthwhile purpose. But in the treatment centers people begin to hear some other type of words and some other languages. They begin to go into a group therapy thing and they begin to sit around the tables and talk about their problems and they begin to develop such terms as the dysfunctional family. And they begin to use such words as chemical dependency, and they began to talk about significant others, and they began to discuss meaningful relationships and they begin to talk about dysfunctional sex, and they begin to talk about this and they begin to talk about that. And the program in the treatment center wasn't like the program in the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". Well naturally the new people from the treatment centers coming into A.A. wanted to talk about what they knew to talk about is what they had learned in other places.



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AND SLOWLY, SLOWLY, SLOWLY, THE PROGRAM IN THE FELLOWSHIP BEGAN TO CHANGE

And as the years went by, it began to change more and more and more, until today sometimes you go to an A.A. meeting and if they didn't read the preamble before the meeting, you wouldn't know what kind of meeting you're in, because they talk about everything except alcoholism and recovery there from it. We like to refer to those meetings as group depression meetings. You go in there feeling pretty good. Half way through the meeting you might as well just go ahead and blow your brains out...hell it's not even worth living any longer.

So what we're going to be talk about this weekend is not the program in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous today.

We're going to talk about the program in the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous," that the first one hundred used, which has never been changed.

- **The program in the fellowship has definitely changed.**
- **The program in the book *has never changed.***

Let's go to Roman numeral xx, let's see how effective this thing used to be, when the program in the book and the program in the fellowship were the same.

Big Book p. xix, last line *“While the internal difficulties of our adolescent period were being ironed out, public acceptance of A.A. grew by leaps and bounds. For this there were two principal reasons: the large numbers of recoveries, and reunited homes. These made their impressions everywhere. Of alcoholics who came to A.A. and really tried,*

- (1) 50% got sober at once and remained that way;*
- (2) 25% sobered up after some relapses, and*
- (3) among the remainder, those who stayed on with A.A. showed improvement.*

Other thousands came to a few A.A. meetings and at first decided they didn't want the program. But great numbers of these --about two out of three--began to return as time passed.”

J & C If my math is correct that's 75% of those people who came to A.A. in the early days and worked the program that's in the book stayed sober, eventually. I know in my area, I don't know what it's like in you're area, but we can't talk about 75%. We can't talk about 50%. We can't talk about 25%. I doubt if we can talk about 10%, truthfully. And the reason for that I believe is that the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous got away from the program that's in the book called Alcoholics Anonymous and that worked.

And so what we're going to do this weekend as Charlie said, we're going to talk about the fellowship that's in the program called Alcoholics Anonymous, and we're going to ask each and everyone of you to go back to your groups and listen to the conversations that you hear around the tables and see how closely it tallies with the program that's in the book called Alcoholics Anonymous. And if it doesn't we suggest you do something about it. That's our charge to you this weekend.

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A lot of we older members of Alcoholics Anonymous tend to blame this problem on the newcomer. The newcomer comes in here, and they want to talk about the only thing they know to talk about. And too many we older members have said well we can't identify with those people anymore, so we're just going to stay home. And when we do, we've abdicated our responsibility for Alcoholics Anonymous, we've turned it over to the sickest of the sickest, who are the newcomers, and then we stand back and say look what they're doing to our A.A. Now I think that's our responsibility, to be sure that every newcomer that walks in the door, and we tell them, that stuff you've learned, wherever you've learned it, is probably good information, but that is not A.A. information, here's A.A. information. And we start talking about the program of recovery in the book, "Alcoholics Anonymous". And

We take them (newcomers) by the hand, and we lead them through this program of recovery,
So they can have a spiritual awakening also.
I think they call that sponsorship, and that's sorely, sorely lacking in A.A. today.
And I think that's our responsibility, it's not the responsibility of the new people;
It's the responsibility of we older members.

And we need to stand up and stand pact,
and insist that in our meetings we talk about alcoholism and recovery there from;
the program in the book. And I'll just bet you we can see more people recover from alcoholism. Probably never will get back to 75%, but we can certainly do better than we're doing today.

Now we're not going to preach anymore. That's all the preaching for this entire weekend I guarantee you.
Hope you don't believe that.

Now that we know a little bit about the history, let's go back to the Table of Contents (Roman numeral v) let's look at it for just a moment. Let's see if we can't see the same pattern in this book that the first one hundred used. Do all of you have one of these little folders like this? Okay, we're going to put a picture up here on this screen, I know some of you will hardly be able to see it at all from this location, but you'll have a picture in that book which will match it if you can't see it.

BIG BOOK GOALS		
Table of Contents		
Goal 1 Problem	Goal 2 Solution	Goal 3 Action Necessary for Recovery
Drs.' Opinion Chapter 1 - Bill's Story	Chapter 2 - There Is A Solution Chapter 3 - More About Alcoholism Chapter 4 - We Agnostics	Chapter 5 - How It Works Chapter 6 - Into Action Chapter 7 - Working With Others
Step 1	Step-2	Steps - 3 thru 12
POWERLESS	POWER	HOW TO FIND POWER

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I'm in the printing business and I have been all of my life and I print books like this and I've been in conversation with many people and when I started reading this book Alcoholics Anonymous I guess I must have had brain damage or something, but it never dawned on me that this book was laid out in any particular way. After all a bunch of old alcoholics wrote it so what would they know about laying out a book I thought, so I didn't pay any attention to that. Come to find out though this book had lots of good information lots of good help with laying out this book.

This book is laid out in a particular manner to bring about certain ideas.

Each chapter is very, very important.

Each page is very, very important.

Each paragraph is very, very important.

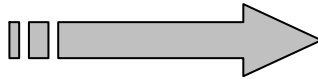
One paragraph leads to the next and the information in that paragraph on that page leads to the next.

And that's the way it goes in this book Alcoholics Anonymous, everything is important, and it's laid out in a certain sequence to bring about certain ideas.

Most books have two particular goals, especially this one does.

And the **1st goal** in this book it tells us what the problem is, and that's the goal number one. And they're going to use

The Dr.'s Opinion,
and Chapter 1 - Bill's Story



basically to tell us what the problem is.

And then the **2nd goal** is going to be the solution; they're going to give us the solution to the problem that they described. And they know we're going to have problems with that solution just like they did. So they're going to talk

Chapter 2: There Is A Solution

Chapter 3: More About Alcoholism

The solution has to do with spiritual matters and they know we're going to have some of those problems. So they wrote down

Chapter 4: We Agnostics for those of us who had problems in that area.

And the **3rd goal** is actions necessary for recovery and we're going to begin with

Chapter 5: How It Works

Chapter 6: Into Action,

Chapter 7: Working with Others

So this book is laid out in particular reasons to bring about certain ideas all the way across, all the way through the book. And that helped me in studying the book.

I hear people today talking about going to a Step Study Meeting. And they're always referring to studying the steps out of the Twelve and Twelve and if you'll notice these chapters correspond with the steps also.

And any time you're studying the Big Book, you're studying the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

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In that Dr.'s Opinion & Bill's Story, we're going to see nearly all the information, a little bit of it in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 but most of it will be in The Dr.'s Opinion and Bill's Story. We'll be able to see everything that we need to in order to see what our problem really is, and we'll **be able to see where we are absolutely powerless over alcohol and our lives have become unmanageable**, and really that's Step 1.

Step 1 If we're going to boil it down to just one word would be powerless.
Then when we can see that powerless condition,
Then obviously the answer to that is going to be power
and remember Ebby told Bill

it has to be the aid of a power greater than human power.

So through Chapters 2, 3 and 4,

we're going to be able to see that power,
and we're going to get some new information about spirituality so
we'll be able to come to believe that maybe that power could help us also.

And there where you'll do Step 2.

That's the power; We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. I know we're powerless, and we know we need the power, and the only other thing we need to know is how do you find that power. And that's what Chapter's 5, 6, and 7 are about. There we will see the last 10 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

And if we follow them (The Steps)
we will have a spiritual awakening,
we will have found the power,
and we're no longer powerless over alcohol.

I read this book for years before I saw that sequence. The same identical sequence that Bill and Bob and the first one hundred had to know.

What is the problem? Step 1 (The Doctor's Opinion)
(Chapter 1 - Bill's Story)

What is the solution? Step 2 (Solution)
(Chapter 3 - More About Alcoholism)
(Chapter 4 - We Agnostics)

What is the program of action necessary to find it?

Steps 3-12 (Chapter 5 - How It Works)
(Chapter 6 - Into Action)
Chapter 7 - Working with Others)

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AND WE'LL BEGIN TO STUDY THE BOOK IN THIS MANNER. IT BECOMES A VERY FASCINATING BOOK; TO SEE HOW EACH CHAPTER TIES INTO THE NEXT CHAPTER TO CONVEY THESE CERTAIN IDEAS IN THE PROPER SEQUENCE.