

# Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

## Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #8

**Bill's Story**  
(09:47 minutes)

(Session 09-

J & C On about December the 10th probably, 1934, Bill was put back in the hospital for the third time, for withdrawal from alcohol by Doctor Silkworth. Ebby comes to visit with him,

1. **they begin to apply the little Oxford Group program of action, and**
2. **Bill had his spiritual experience.** (after Steps 3-12)

Let's look on page 13. Let's see if we can't see the last 10 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. He's taken 1 & 2; let's see if we can't see the last ten. He said,

***Big Book p.13, par.2** At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens. There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then I understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost.*

J & C **The first tenet that the Oxford Group had was Surrender.** Now Bill later on when he wrote the steps he realized that no alcoholic would like the word surrender so he changed their 1st Step into our 3rd where, "**We made decision to turn our will and life over to the Care of God as we Understand Him**". We see him there taking the first Oxford Group tenet, which turned out to be our Step 3.

He's now taken 1, 2 and 3. He said,

***Big Book p.13, par. 3** "I ruthlessly faced my sins"*

J & C I ruthlessly faced my sins. **Their second tenet was exam your sins.** And Bill knew that no good alcoholic's going to do that, so he changed that into **Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.** He's taking Step 4 there

***Big Book p.13, par. 3** and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.*

J & C "... became willing to have my new-found **Friend** take them away, root and branch". You'll notice friend is capitalized. This is one of the words Bill uses for God. And that little statement "... became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch", later became **Step 6 and 7.** We became willing to have God remove these things and humbly asked Him to do so. There we're dealing with six and seven.

***Big Book p.13, par. 4** "My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies."*

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J & C        He's taking what we know today as **Step Five**, there in the Towns Hospital with Ebby.

***Big Book p.13, par. 4**        We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.*

J & C        They had an Oxford Group **tenet** called **Restitution**. And Bill knew that no self-respecting alcoholic is going to do restitution, so he took that and made two Steps out of it, **Step 8 and 9**, where **we made a list and became willing, and then made amends**. There he's dealing with eight and nine.

***Big Book p.13, par. 5**        I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense*

J & C        That statement later became **Step 10** where **we continue to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly explained it, I mean admitted it**. That's the new Step 10.

***Big Book p.13, par. 5**        I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure.*

J & C        And there we see all the elements of Step 12, **where we sought through prayer and medica..., meditation to improve our conscious contact with God** so on and so forth. **There he's dealing with Step 11**, I'm sorry, Step 11.

***Big Book p.13, par. 6** My friend promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems.*

J & C        It's got to be **the first part of Step Twelve... Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps**.

So we see Bill in the Towns Hospital applying the Oxford Group tenets which later he made into the last ten steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is why he was able to say in How It Works, these are the steps we took which are suggested as a program of recovery. Bill took them in the Towns Hospital with the help of Ebby. Now let's see what happened to him.

***Big Book p.13, par. 6**        Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential*

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*requirements. Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.*

J & C            Poor old alcoholics have to give up the 2 most important things in our lives and the first thing is our alcohol and the second thing is our self-centeredness.  
Very difficult to do, very difficult but very simple.

**Big Book p.14, par. 3**            *These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never know. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up; as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. God comes to most men gradually, but His impact on me was sudden and profound. For a moment I was alarmed, and called my friend, the doctor, to ask if I were still sane. He listened in wonder as I talked.*

J & C            You know Bill overhead Lois and Dr. Silkworth talking so he'd thought he gone crazy. He thought he'd check it out with Dr. Silkworth to see if he had gone crazy. Finally he shared with the Dr. his experience.

**Big Book p.14, par. 5** *"Finally he shook his head saying, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were." The good doctor now sees many men who have such experiences. He knows that they are real. "*

J & C            Now we don't know what happened to Bill that day, we were not there to see that. But we know this was probably about December the 14th of 1934. We do know that Bill didn't die until January of 1971. We do know that it was never necessary for him to take another drink from this day until the day that he died.

Something profound took place in his life that day. Bill always said, I had a vital spiritual experience as the result of these steps, during which old ideas were cast aside and replaced with a new set of ideas, and I was able to live the rest of my live without drinking.

“ Now here's a guy that went in the hospital, **selfish and self-centered to the extreme, always doing what he wanted to do whenever he wanted to do it.** That was his attitude when he went in there. Let's look at his attitude now that he's had the spiritual experience.

**Big Book p.14, par. 6**            *While I lay in the hospital the thought came that there were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others.*

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J & C Bill had that **gigantic spiritual experience** and then he immediately began to think of how he can give it to other people. Something profound happened with Bill. He said.

*Big Book p.14, par 7 My friend*

J & C and this time you'll notice it's a small „f“, he's referring to Ebby now.

*Big Book p.14, par 7 My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that.*

J & C Thank God Bill knew that and accepted that fact cause when he was in Akron about to get drunk he remember how back in New York City even though **he'd never helped anybody else that he himself had felt better**. That's why he got hold of Dr. Bob, to try to help Dr. Bob. **Not necessarily to sober up Bob, but to keep Bill from getting drunk**. And thank God it kept him from getting drunk, and Bob sobered up and from there we have the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Faith without works is dead.** (Chapter 6, Into Action, p. 76 & 88)

And you know just about anybody I see drink today that's been in A.A. for any period of time, usually they have quit working with other people. And when they quit working with other people

1. **they start thinking about self only** and,
2. **after a while all the old problems come back**, and
3. **we end up getting drunk** all over again.

Always working with others will help us when nothing else will. He said,

*Big Book p.15, par. 2 My wife and I abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other alcoholics to a solution of their problems. It was fortunate, for my old business associates remained skeptical for a year and a half, during which I found little work. I was not too well at the time, and was plagued by waves of self-pity and resentment. This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that when all other measure failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day. Many times I have gone to my old hospital in despair. On talking to a man there, I would be amazingly lifted up and set on my feet. It is a design for living that works in rough going.*

J & C We took a design for living that works in rough going and turned it into a non-drinking society I'm afraid. This is a design for living. **And the work is really, really**

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**hard, but the pay is really, really good too.** We've managed to stay sober, isn't that something? Now if we're a brand new alcoholic out here in California, no fellowship around us, the first contact we've ever had is this book called Alcoholics Anonymous, and we've

1. read the Dr.'s Opinion, we've been able to **see what our problem is.**
2. read Bill's story, we've been **able to identify with another alcoholic.**
3. seen him go from
  - a) fun **drinking** to
  - b) drinking **because of absolute necessity** going finally
  - c) to the sickest of all, **complete oblivion.**
4. seen him **recover from that condition**

and surely, surely we can say to ourselves **we're enough like this guy that if he can recover just maybe we could too.**

**The beginning of belief, the beginning of hope.**

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**There Is A Solution**  
10:44 minutes)

(Session10a-

J & C By now we could probably hardly wait to see what really did take place in Bill's life and how he recovered.

regained health of mind and body

And I don't think it's by accident the very next chapter is titled, "There is a Solution". There is a solution to the thing that Bill has really described in his own story here and to what Dr. Silkworth has talked to us about.

Now if our

problem is (being) powerless which we should be convinced of that by now  
then obviously the answer is going to lie within power.

And in this chapter there is a solution. We're going to talk about two powers.  
We're going to talk about

**(1) the power of the fellowship**

and we're going to talk about

**(2) the power of the vital spiritual experience.**

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And if we, who are powerless, could get both of these powers in our lives, then maybe we could overcome alcoholism also.

On page 17, for those who are powerless he writes the prescription. Here he talks about the two powers. Ebby presented Bill with a solution and now Bill is going to present us with a solution in the same way. He said there is a solution. A friend of mine back home said there's many different types of solutions there are people in A.A. And if you look at the chapter heading on, page 17, he'll tell you how many solutions there are,

**“There is a solution”, (ONE)**

J & C He said, “We”, and there's that big word again.

**Big Book p. 17, par. 1**            *“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, know thousands of men and women who were once just as hopeless as Bill. Nearly all have recovered. They have solved the drink problem. We are average Americans.”*

J & C            Today we can say that we're average citizens of the world because by last count (1988) there was, A.A.'s in 154 countries around the world.

**Big Book p. 17, par. 2**            *“All sections of this country and many of its occupations are represented, as well as many political, economic, social, and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix.”*

J & C            And I think that we're probably the most **mixed** up group of alcoholics in the world here this morning here in Laughlin, Nevada. You know if we didn't have "Alcoholics Anonymous" to talk about or drinking or recovery there from, I wonder what we would drink about/talk about. There's hardly anything... I told you I had a good memory it's just short. We wouldn't have anything to talk about. It says,

**Big Book p. 17, par. 2**            *“We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful.”*

J & C            And I hear that this morning and before the meeting all the talk and the laughter and the goings on, that's the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous, and I got sober on the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous. That was the only thing keeping me here. So it's a powerful thing, the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, kept me sober for quite some time.

**the fellowship can keep you sober for quite some time, but it can't keep you sober forever (without the program in the book)**

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Now he's going to describe this fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. By talking about something he already assumes that we know about it, he thinks that we already know about it and all great teachers have always done this. When they want to teach you something new, they talk to you first about something you already know and use that as an example to teach you something new.

You know we had a great teacher that lived 2000 years ago and he was really good at this. When he wanted to teach something to the shepherds, he'd tell them a story about sheep. But if he wanted to teach the same thing to the fisherman he would change the story, this time it would be about fish. Then when he went to the farmer he talked about cattle and grains. All good teachers do this. Bill is going to use the example of the great passenger ship. He said,

*Big Book p. 17, par. 2*      *"We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table."*

J & C      Bill is referring to a time in the Thirties when your mode of transportation from one continent to another was by the great ocean liners. And on those great ocean liners they had what they called the steerage section. And people who were immigrants and didn't have very much money they usually booked passage in the steerage section. Way down in the bowels of the ship, with very little fresh air, dormitory style living, I call it the cheese sandwich section, not very good down there. If you had a little more money though and you wanted better accommodations you could pay for fourth class and come up a deck to two. Maybe you could go third class and come up another deck or two. Maybe you could go second class and come up another deck or two. And each time the accommodations and the food were better. If you had enough money you could go in what they call first class. In first class they had big fine staterooms, they had great dining rooms, they had good food, fine waiters, access to fresh air all the time. But that still wasn't the most elite place on the ship. If you had the right kind of money, old, old money, old money, if you had the right religion, the right ethnic background, the right everything, you might be invited to dine at the Captain's table. Just a few select people could do that. And at the Captain's table you had the best of everything; the best service, the best food, the best everything. Now it's a long, long way from the Captain's table to the steerage section.

And in the journey across the ocean, those two people should never have met each other. In fact most of those ocean liners even had separate stairwells. So the first class people never even had to see those who rode in the steerage section. They had nothing whatsoever in common. Then I think about the Titanic. When the night it hit the iceberg and these two guys are standing there at the rail of the ship and one of them got his tuxedo on, his shiny shoes and his little bow tie and everything that goes with it. Standing next to him is the guy from the steerage section. Got his old work overalls on, his old brogans, never wore a tie in his life. These guys have nothing whatsoever in common with each other until they jumped overboard.

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And when they jumped overboard, and their butts hit that cold water, they had something in common. How in the hell do we save ourselves? And they grabbed on to each other and held on to each other, and I doubt very seriously if the man from the Captains table asked for a financial statement from the man from the steerage section.

And when these two guys were rescued and got back on another ship or back on land there was a feeling amongst them, which was indescribably wonderful.  
This has always been true

When people escape from a common peril  
there is a feeling that ties them together  
and it's one of the greatest feelings in the world  
and that's what we've got in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

We don't care who you are.

We don't care where you came from.

We don't care how much money you got.

We don't care what your education is.

We don't care what your ethnic background is, what your religion is or anything else.

All we want to know is, are you an alcoholic?

And if you are, there is a feeling amongst us, which is indescribably wonderful.

Even though we are so different from each other, we are still bound together.

**Now watch him, he's going to give us a warning.**

**Big Book p. 17, par. 2**            *“Unlike the feelings of the ship's passengers, however, our joy in escape from disaster does not subside as we go our individual ways.”*

J & C            These two guys when they finally got back on shore, they looked at each other and said well we really don't belong together, and they separated probably never to meet again. But we will always be alcoholic, and this feeling we have for each other never goes away and we find it again in city, after city, after city, and country after country.

One of the greatest things I've been able to experience in my lifetime is to go to an A.A. meeting in a foreign country and feel just exactly as good as I did at home. Even though I don't know those people we are bound together because we're alcoholics.

**Big**

**Book p 17. par. 2**            *“The feeling of having shared in a common peril is one element in the powerful cement which binds us. But that in itself would never have held us together as we are now joined.”*

J & C In other words, this feeling we have for each other in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is one of the things that bind us together. But then he said, that itself is not enough.



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**Big Book p. 17, par. 3**      *“The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism.”*

J & C      **Not the news of the fellowship, but the news of the common solution.**

And later on we’re going to see where

- the common solution
- is the spiritual experience
- brought about through the program of action.

**This is the  
prescription  
that J & C refers to on  
page 1 of this script**

if we can get the power of the fellowship –  
which supports us and helps us,  
and if we can get the power of the spiritual experience  
–  
which changes us,  
and add the two together  
then that will be enough power  
to overcome our powerlessness over alcohol  
and we can recover from that condition.

I think one of the greatest tragedies that I see in the world today, and there’s lots of tragedies going on in the world today, one of the greatest that I see is we people who are in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are spending literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, hundreds and hundreds and thousands of men and women work hours, trying to attract other alcoholics to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, when

**we’ve got thousands and thousands (of alcoholics)  
who are already members of Alcoholics Anonymous who are sitting around dying  
from untreated alcoholism,  
because they are doing nothing about the common solution.**

And the reason they’re doing nothing about the common solution is nobody’s telling them about it.  
nobody’s talking about it,  
nobody’s saying look, here’s the **program of action.**  
nobody’s saying, let me take you by the hand and walk with you  
so you can have a **spiritual experience.**

And they’re fellowship only, and after a while they go back to drinking and they say well, A.A. don’t work for us. No, they didn’t work for A.A.; they didn’t do the program.

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the fellowship can keep you sober for quite some time, but it can't keep you sober forever (without the program in the book)

And again

it's not their fault,

it's our fault

we're not insisting that new people work the program of Alcoholics Anonymous  
and

*we're letting them die around us.*

Thousands of us are dying everyday who are already members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It's our responsibility to see that every newcomer knows about page 17 and knows there are two powers:

- a) the power of the fellowship, and
- b) the power of the spiritual experience.

**And we're not going to recover without both of them.**

Now we might stay sober for a while, but we're not going to recover from alcoholism without both of them.

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