

Big Book Comes Alive Study Group

Joe & Charlie Audio Workshop

WEEK #9

There Is A Solution

(Session 10b -00:09:00.)

A good textbook never tells you anything but what it doesn't back it up and prove it. The first half of this chapter is designed to show you and I why fellowship alone is not sufficient.

The last half of this chapter is used to show us the solution to alcoholism, the vital spiritual experience. Let's look for just a few minutes at why fellowship alone is not sufficient and then we'll take a break. Go to page 20,

Big Book p. 20, par. 2 *"You may already have asked yourself why it is that all of us became so very ill from drinking. Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body. If you are an alcoholic who wants to get over it, you may already be asking What do I have to do? It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically."*

J & C Remember last night we talked about precisely, specifically, with clear-cut directions. Well here's one of those words.

Big Book p. 20, par. 3 *"We shall tell you what we have done. Before going into a detailed discussion, it may be well to summarize some points as we see them."*
How many time people have said to us: "I can take it or leave it alone. Why can't he?" "Why don't you drink like a gentleman or quit?" "That fellow can't handle his liquor." "Why don't you try beer and wine?" "Lay off the hard stuff." "His will power must be weak." "He could stop if he wanted to." "She's such a sweet girl, I should think he'd stop for her sake." "The doctor told him that if he ever drank again it would kill him, but there he is all lit up again."
Now these are commonplace observations on drinkers which we hear all the time. Back of them is a world of ignorance and misunderstanding. We see that these expressions refer to people whose reactions are very different from ours."

J & C And we're going to look at two kinds of drinkers that these expressions that Joe just read, would refer to them.

Big Book p. 20, par. 6 Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone."

J & C Remember we talked about them last night. They have a couple of drinks; they get a slightly tipsy out of control beginnings of a nauseous feeling? Alcohol is no big deal for them. If they have any problems with it, they simply leave it alone. Those expressions that Joe read would certainly refer to the moderate drinker.

Big Book p. 20, par. 7 *"Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention."*

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J & C We call this guy the heavy or the hard drinker. They drink like we alcoholics drink, but they are not alcoholic. If a good enough reason presents itself to them, they'll do one of two things. They may learn to moderate their drinking; they do not have the physical allergy. They may quit drinking entirely and stay quit; they do not have the obsession of the mind.

They drink like us, but they're not alcoholic.

You and I see them all the time. They're the guy that said when I was in the service I was an alcoholic also. And when I got out of the service I got married, went to church, quit drinking, don't see why in the hell you can't. No, they're not alcoholic. The expressions that Joe read in the beginning refer to the heavy drinker.

Big Book p. 21, par. 2 *"But what about the real alcoholic? He may start off as a moderate drinker;*

J & C Which many of us did.

Big Book, p. 21, par 2 *"he may or may not become a continuous hard drinker;*

J & C Some of us stayed periodic.

Big Book, p. 21, par 2 *"but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink."*

J & C Now then we're going to describe the real alcoholic, and when you see a description in there that fits you, would you please raise your hand. We'd like to see if we're in a room full of real alcoholics.

Big Book p. 21, par. 2 *"but at some stage of his drinking career he begins to lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink."*

J & C Charlie talked last night about; he talked last night about crossing over that line. He talked last night about crossing over that line, but I don't know what line he was talking about, but I know one thing; I was drunk when I went over it.

Big Book p. 21, par. 3 *"Here is the fellow who has been puzzling you, especially in his lack of control. He does absurd, incredible, tragic things while drinking. He is a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He is seldom mildly intoxicated. He is always more or less insanely drunk."*

J & C Anybody like that in here? You betcha.

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *"His disposition while drinking resembles his normal nature but little."*

J & C I always get good looking and out of debt as soon as I start drinking.

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *"He may be one of the finest fellows in the world. Yet let him drink for a day, and he frequently becomes disgustingly, and even dangerously anti-social."*

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J & C We got any of those people in here?

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *“He has a positive genius for getting tight at exactly the wrong moment, particularly when some important decision must be made or engagement kept.”*

J & C Anybody in here like that, always getting drunk at the wrong time. Now everybody holds their hand up here on this one.

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *“He is often perfectly sensible and well balanced concerning everything except liquor, but in that respect he is incredibly dishonest and selfish. He often possesses special abilities, skills, and aptitudes, and has a promising career ahead of him.”*

J & C Anybody like that in here? I’ve never heard anybody but an alcoholic say that though. I’ve never heard an AlAnon say it yet.

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *“He uses his gifts to build up a bright outlook for his family and himself, and then pulls the structure down on his head by a senseless series of sprees.”*

J & C Anybody like that in here?

Big Book p. 21, par 3 *“He is the fellow who goes to bed so intoxicated he ought to sleep the clock around. Yet early next morning he searches madly for the bottle he misplaced the night before.”*

J & C Any bottle hidiers in here?

Big Book p. 22, par1 *“If he can afford it, he may have liquor concealed all over his house to be certain no one gets his entire supply away from him to throw down the waste pipe.”*

J & C Anybody spread them around wherever you might be? Phyllis and I used to by a lug of whiskey, which is 3 fifths; one to share, and one to hide from each other.

Big Book p. 22, par1 *“As matters grow worse, he begins to use a combination of high-powered sedative and liquor to quiet his nerves so he can go to work.”*

J & C Anybody ever have to have a little something in the morning?

Big Book p. 22, par 1 *“Then comes the day when he simply cannot make it and gets drunk all over again. Perhaps he goes to a doctor who gives him morphine or some sedative with which to taper off. Then he begins to appear at hospitals and (treatment, uh excuse me), sanitariums.*

J & C I never did taper off, I always tapered on for some reason.

Big Book p. 21, par 2 *“This is by no means a comprehensive picture of the true alcoholic, as our behavior patterns vary. But this description should identify him roughly.”*

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J & C Now if our government has ever done anything right in the field of alcoholism, it's the education of the public as to what alcoholism is and what it isn't. Because of that a lot of the stigma has been removed from alcoholism. Many, many people are getting to us today before they have to do everything here that describes the real alcoholic. And I'll guarantee you if you're alcoholic you found yourself in there somewhere; at least one of them are going to fit you. In my case practically every one of them, one in particular. Seven years after I got sober I sold a forty-acre, forty-five thousand boiler chicken operation. For years after that, every once in a while I would run into the guy that bought it and sometimes he would way and smile and say, hey Charlie, we have found another one. And he was referring to partially empty vodka bottles. Behind corner posts, under rocks, hollow trees, falling out of feed bins. And he found them for years in there. Now here's the question,

Big Book p. 22, par. 3 *"Why does he behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, why is it he takes that one drink? Why can't he stay on the water wagon?"*

J & C The moderate drinker can. The heavy drinker can. Why can't the alcoholic?

Big Book p. 22, par. 3 *"What has become of the common sense and will power that he still sometimes displays with respect to other matters? Perhaps there never will be a full answer to these questions. Opinions vary considerably as to why the alcoholic reacts differently from normal people. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for him. We cannot answer the riddle. We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this. These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.*

J & C Would you read that again please?

Big Book p. 23, par. 1, line 3 *"Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body."*

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(Session 11 -00:18:07.)

repeated last paragraph from Session 10

Big Book, p. 22, par. 4 *We know that while the alcoholic keeps away from drink, as he may do for months or years, he reacts much like other men. We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and mental sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. The experience of any alcoholic will abundantly confirm this."*

Big Book, p. 23, par. 1 *"These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.*

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J & C Would you read that again please.

Big Book p. 23, par 1 *“Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.”*

J & C Now we must remember that always, just before we take the first drink, we are stone cold sober. Or stark raving sober one of the two. And the real problem centers in our mind telling us we can drink while sober, rather than in the body that ensures that we can't drink.

Big Book p. 23, par 1 *If you ask him why he started on that last bender, the chances are he will offer you any one of a hundred alibis. Sometimes these excuses have a certain plausibility, but none of them really makes sense in the light of the havoc an alcoholic's drinking bout creates. They sound like the philosophy of the man who, having a headache, beats himself on the head with a hammer so that he can't feel the ache. If you draw this fallacious reasoning to the attention of an alcoholic, he will laugh it off, or become irritated and refuse to talk. Once in a while he may tell the truth*

J & C And as strange as it may seem there are times we alcoholics tell the truth – not very often – but once in a great while. Had a lady who was in Al-Anon came to me one time and her husband was still drinking and she said, “Charlie, all he does is lie, lie, lie.” She said “How can you tell when one of you guys are lying.” And I said “Lady, watch him closely, and if you see his lips moving he's probably lying to you all right”. And then I said “Do you want me to tell you how to keep him from lying?” and she said “Yeah yeah” and I said “Don't ask him those stupid questions ...he has no more idea than you do”. Now here's the truth.

Big Book p. 23, par 2 *And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took that first drink than you have. Some drinkers have excuses with which they are satisfied part of the time. But in their hearts they really do not know why they do it. Once this malady has a real hold, they are a baffled lot. There is the obsession that somehow, someday, they will beat the game. But they often suspect they are down for the count.*

J & C Now there is the word obsession. Remember that An obsession of the mind is an idea that overcomes all ideas to the contrary. An obsession of the mind is an idea that is so strong it can make you believe something that is not true. That great obsession of every alcoholic is - someday, somehow we are going to find some kind of liquor that we can drink without getting drunk. - someday somehow we are going to find a group of people that we can drink with - someday somehow we are going to find a place... And that idea is so strong; it makes us believe that it is OK for us to drink. We take a drink, we trigger the allergy and we end up drunk.

So the real problem centers in our mind telling us we **can** drink rather than in our body which ensures that we can't. I've never heard anybody yet say “I'm gonna go have 2 drinks and go to the jailhouse tonight.” We always say we are going to have 2 drinks and have fun. And we have the 2 drinks and then we go to the jailhouse. So the real problem is right up here, rather than down here.

Big Book p. 24, par 2 *The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.*

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J & C Can't remember the jailhouse, can't remember the divorce court, can't remember what alcohol had done **to** me, can only remember what it has done **for** me. And that will drive me back to drinking. I always said that I don't want for memory it's just short. Just can not remember those things that alcohol had done to me.

***Big Book p. 24, par 1** The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove.*

J & C You know if you've put your hand on a hot stove and it's burned you badly, chances are you will always remember that. Chances are you will never go put your hand on a hot stove again to see if it will burn you the second time. Now I remember as a kid growing up back in the depression years and there's a few of you in here old enough to remember that too. Back in the 1930's we didn't have very much. We didn't have hot and cold running water, we didn't have forced air heat. Joe said his family was not so poor they had to live in a tent but he said by God if we'd have had the money we'd have lived in a tent. That's about how bad it was. But I remember in those days, even though you didn't have anything, you were very poor people, cleanliness was still next to Godliness. And every Saturday night everybody in the family had to take a bath. Now whether you needed a bath or not is besides the point, you still had to take one.

And one night in the middle of the winter, mother had heated the bath water on the old heating stove in the living room, put it in the Number 3 Zinc washtub sitting being that stove. Now every kid in the family takes a bath in the same water...I'm the baby of the family. By the time it got to me the crud would be about an inch thick on it. Mother said "Get in there and get yourself clean" and I thought to myself how in the hell do I get clean there but I didn't dare say that to her. You didn't talk to your parents that way in the 1930s. I scraped the crud back, I got in the tub, began to wash myself heating stove standing here red hot...somehow I managed to lean over and stick my rear against that hot stove. Burned a blister on my rear end about as big as my hand, hurt me worse than anything had ever hurt me before.

And do you know that I have never had an obsession of the mind to stick my ass on a hot stove since then. I have never jerked my britches down, backed up to a stove and said burn me again. Now alcohol has burned me over and over and over and over and over just as bad as that stove ever burned me and for some strange reason my mind cannot remember that. Left on my own resources I start thinking about drinking and after a while I think about only what it's going to do for me. That great sense of ease and comfort, that great exciting in control feeling that comes from the first couple of drinks and my mind keys in on that. I forget about the jailhouse, the hospitals and the divorce courts and I don't see a thing in the world wrong with taking a drink. And I take a drink, and I trigger the allergy and I end up drunk...over and over and over again.

***Big Book p. 24, par 4** When this sort of thinking is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go permanently insane.*

J & C Now if we've placed ourselves beyond human aid, then the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous will not bring about recovery. Because the fellowship is made up of a group of human beings who are just as powerless over alcohol as I am. So there has got to be a solution to that condition that we've just talked about and page 25 gives it to us.

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Big Book p. 25, par 1 *There is a solution.*

J & C OK guys, here we go. We're gonna start getting well now. Better come on in. Let's go to page 25. Let's begin to look at the solution we could see that the fellowship gave us enough power to support us for a while. But we were told that the fellowship enough was not sufficient. And then it explained why fellowship alone was not sufficient. So now on page 25 we'll start looking at the real solution to alcoholism.

Big Book p. 25, par 1 *There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self- searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.*

J & C And you notice up there it says

Big Book p. 25, par 2 *The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences* which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.*

J & C And you notice up there it says

Big Book p. 25, par 2 *The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences**

J & C And there is a little asterisk there referring us down to the bottom of the page. It says "Fully explained – Appendix II" And later on we'll refer to it on page 27 it "For amplification - see Appendix II" And on page 47 referring to the asterisk it says "Please see Appendix II". Must be important. Very important if they repeat it three times.

And they are talking about spiritual experiences and spiritual awakenings and in the first printing of the book they didn't have this little asterisk there and they didn't have the reference to the spiritual experience in the back of the book. And a lot of people would write in to that little office, to Bill, and say Bill what do you mean by spiritual experience and spiritual awakenings? We're doing the same things that you are doing but we're not having the same experiences that you had. What do you mean by that? And it was very important for me looking back at it now that I know this because I had this spiritual experience mixed up with a bunch of things that I learned when I was 7 or 8 years old. Cause when I was 7 or 8 years old I told myself, I said "Self if I ever get big enough they can't catch me I'm not going anymore". To church that is.

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And I got big enough they couldn't catch me and I didn't go. So when I arrived at Alcoholics Anonymous I had the spiritual knowledge of a 7 or 8 year old boy which was practically none and that that I did have was all mistaken and mixed up. And lot's of emotionalism, things that I didn't understand. The times that they would catch me and take me to that revival, they had a revival there quite often in my area in the southern Baptist. Really southern. And when I would get there and they would be preaching all day and singing songs and having dinner on the ground and prayer meetings all day long and church way into the night. Bored the heck out of me.

But one night my Aunt Much, and she's a big woman, Aunt Much, that's the reason they call her that. But Aunt Much kind of got into the spirit of this thing that night and she began to jump up and down and she began to talk in a strange language that I had never heard of before, squealing and hollering and rolling around in the sawdust. Scared the heck out of me. So when this book began to talk about spiritual experiences and spiritual awakenings I thought that was what I was going to have to have. And I was dreading it I'm telling you I was. But thank God for people like me who didn't know any better they put this information in the back of the book talking about spiritual experiences and spiritual awakenings. And this used all throughout this book. And they want to make real sure that I understand what they mean by that. So let's go back to page 569 (page 567 in the 4th edition) and see what they mean by the terms spiritual awakenings and spiritual experiences.

Big Book p. 569, par 1 *The terms "spiritual experience" and "spiritual awakening" are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading,*

J & C And we all know that alcoholics don't do careful reading.

Big Book p. 569, par , line 3 *"shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.*

J & C OK the first paragraph we see something. We see that the term may be spiritual experience or it may be spiritual awakening and in either case it's going to be a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery. Dr. Silkworth referred to this as a psychic change. A change in the way we think and the way we feel and our attitude. So we could see several terms. spiritual experience spiritual awakening personality change psychic change all meaning the same thing. Spiritual experience happens suddenly, like it did with Bill and some of the people in back of the stories in the first book, and then we have the spiritual awakening, which develops slowly over a period of a long time.

Big Book p. 569, par 2 *Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous. In the first few chapters a number of sudden revolutionary changes are described. Though it was not our intention to create such an impression, many alcoholics have nevertheless concluded that in order to recover they must acquire an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness" followed at once by a vast change in feeling and outlook. Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the "educational variety" because they develop slowly over a period of time.*

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J & C Now Bill's was a sudden spectacular change. Some of the others in the stories in the back of the book were sudden spectacular changes. But what he's saying here is for most of us it won't happen that way. Most of us will have the educational variety and we will change as we learn and as we apply, slowly over a period of time. Sooner or later though we awakened to the fact that we have changed also. And then we'll call it a spiritual awakening. So it really doesn't make any difference whether it's sudden and spectacular or whether it's a slow thing that evolves over a period of time. In either case it's going to be a personality change sufficient to bring about recovery. Now I can begin to think with this, I can live with this kind of idea. But when you start talking about what Aunt Much had in the Baptist Church, I couldn't live with that idea at all. Cause I was raised in the southern Baptist Church too. And my idea of a spiritual experience was an entirely different thing. Thank God for this Appendix. It let me know what it really is. A change in my personality.

My personality is made up by the way I think, by the way I feel, my attitude and outlook upon life, people, places and things in general. That's what determines my personality. I come here restless, irritable and discontented. Filled with shame, fear, guilt and remorse. If I can change from that to peace of mind, serenity and happiness, I have undergone one hell of a change in my personality. This educational variety is the type that we are having this weekend. Right? We won't be the same after this weekend. None of us will. No.

Big Book p. 569, par. 4 *Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves. Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it "God-consciousness."*

Most emphatically we wish to say that any alcoholic capable of honestly facing his problems in the light of our experience can recover provided he does not close his mind to all spiritual concepts. He can only be defeated by an attitude of intolerance or belligerent denial. We find that no one need have difficulty with the spiritual side of the program. Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable. "There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance - that principle is contempt prior to investigation."

J & C See I knew so many things that were not true when I arrived in Alcoholics Anonymous. Lifelong theories that were not true. I lived my life based upon those things and they didn't work. And they were so true in my mind that it was almost impossible for me to learn something that was true. So I had to lay aside a bunch of old ideas to be able to accept new and I needed an open mind. In fact I need an open mind more today than I have ever needed an open mind because there is so much more to learn throughout life.