

(Thanks)

Thank you so much for inviting me, ...

These principles, they work so well. Usually when I see people have problems it's because they are not clear on what these principles are and how to use them. I see people do 100 times the work that they have to do because they are doing something that is not? ____ (unclear)

I start off in Al-Anon about 20 years ago and so I started off in a trauma based addiction. I did not understand the steps at all. I thought they were going to teach me how to handle my life better, like better coping skills or something because it wasn't going well.

That is not what happened. I remember the moment I realised this was going to be different but what really clarified things for me by the grace of God I ended up wandering into an open AA meeting. I won't take time to tell that story. I should probably say I have 12 years continuous sobriety from my bottom lines in this program, that will just be helpful I guess and this is what I saw. I had been trying to manipulate and change myself. I thought okay I will just identify these defects of character and I will fix them or I will identify the things that made me mad or scared that came as a result of how I grew up and then I would do the opposite. I didn't understand I had a spiritual sickness that was created as a response to the emotional trauma of my upbringing and it had become an addiction. It may have had a psychological cause and it may have psychological symptoms but if something is an addiction (step 1-2) only the power of God can change it and when I understand that then I understood something else.

Well then how do you get that? I mean I believed in God, I was praying. Clearly praying and believing in God doesn't get people sober, otherwise we wouldn't have priests in AA meetings right? How do I get sufficient power and once I saw that was the point, the steps were all about power. You know Bill Wilson says lack of power was our dilemma. I have a spiritual sickness over which I am completely powerless. I need more power than the average bear. When it says you need power the first thing you have to do is find out what is blocking you off from the power of God. God obviously has power. He is obviously here. How come I don't have enough of it?

I am going to give you some page numbers just so you know I'm not making this up. The first one is page 64 which obviously goes along with the 4th step in the AA Big Book. People do their first step, second step, third step, and then it says, "Though our decision was a vital and crucial step it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by strenuous effort to face and be rid of the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our addiction was but a symptom. We had to get down to causes and conditions." Blocking us from what? Blocking us off from the power of God. And all we have to do, when I found out this was the aspects of self, it says "Be convinced that self, manifested in variously ways was what had defeated us we considered its common manifestations. Resentment is the #1 offender. When dealing with resentments we set them on paper. We listed people, institutional or principles with whom we were ankle. We asked ourselves why we were angry." I remember going - you mean that's all I have to do, is write this down on a piece of paper? I had been fighting with it and losing for a while and That is how we get the power from God. As I start writing down aspects of myself, what am I angry about, what am I afraid of, they are blocking me off from God. They are not bad. We are supposed to have a self, right? That does not mean that those things are bad or we have to get rid of them. All I have to do is write them down and read them to somebody and then we will go to, just to give a summary, on page 63 there are six spiritual principles. These are the six principles that were

brought to Bill Wilson: Complete Deflation (Step 1 - stop trying to control the uncontrollable); Dependence and Guidance from a Higher Power (Step 2 and 3); Moral Inventory; Confession; Restitution; and Continued Work with Other Alcoholics.

Not writing down the aspects of self that I have will keep me from getting the power that I have from God. Not admitting, they use the word confessing, that will keep me blocked off from the power I need from God. Hurting other people – that will keep me blocked off from the power I need from God. That's why the first task, all we need to do is write down and read to people what is blocking us off from God. That was a revolutionary idea for me. I don't have to fix it, I don't have to feel bad about it, I don't have to repress it, I just have to write it down on a piece of paper and read it to somebody. That can unblock so much power that I was stunned. Like as _____ knows, it invites so much power that I will often start newcomers off that way. They will walk in the door, they are just miserable. On a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most distressed you can imagine, what number do you have right now? They will say 12! I will say have you got a pen and a piece of paper. I know it sounds like it doesn't make sense. I know it doesn't sound like it means anything at all, **write down three things that you are mad about**. They don't have to be deep, they don't have to be profound, they just have to be true. I don't care if they got your order wrong at the drive through, they didn't have your shoe size at the department store, as long as they are true that's all that matters. They write them down and read them to me. Usually people elect to be more intimate than that but it doesn't matter. Then **write down three things you are afraid of** whatever it could be, losing a sock or game, never being able to get sober. I say write that down and read that to me. I say on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being the most distressed you can imagine, 0 being not distressed at all what number are you, and they say I'm like a 6! And that's the power of God coming in to give us relief. Not because He didn't want to but because those aspect of self were blocked off. I say now do that tomorrow. Do that for three days and tell me how you feel because every time we do that we get rid of a little bit of what is blocking us off from the power that we need to not drown in our addiction.

One of the reasons I start off with that is because in a trauma based addiction it is so overwhelming, it is not like alcoholism, where you have a drink, you put down alcohol there may or may not be a fully functioning person under there. When I put down my addictive obsessive compulsive behaviours underneath is the hurt person that needed those behaviours to survive. That is why it is so much more painful. It is why the withdrawal is more painful, it is why the step work is more painful. We almost need the power that we can get from the steps to do the steps which is why I am bringing this up now.

A lot of times when I help people, you can see right there on that next page 64, it really doesn't look that hard.

Mr. Brown, I'm resentful at his attentions to my wife, he may get my job at the office.... This doesn't look like very deep or challenging material but for us it is sort of going to be challenging material. Time and time again I have seen people, they think that their fourth step has to be, their sponsor gives them a sheet of 125 questions of every horrible thing that's every happened to them, every horrible thing they've ever done here get back to me in a month, which usually doesn't, people give up, they relapse, they decide never to do a fourth step again. That's a protocol, that's not a principle. If while someone is going through this process they start to lose power they can pick up any one of those other principles and get power. Is this making sense, _____? The reason I say that is t we almost need the power of these principles to get through withdrawal. We almost need the power of these principles to get

through our fourth step inventory which is why what I was going to do is clarify what those principles are. You know people say we are supposed to do them in order, but where did you read that? People make up stuff and then they keep it from working. The value of understanding a spiritual, it's the difference between working in a toaster factory and being an electrical engineer. If you work in a toaster factor you know how to make a toaster but unless you need to make toast or Pop-Tarts you don't have anything to offer anybody. If you are an electrical engineer and you understand the underlying principles you can build anything and you can apply those principles to anything from a cell phone to a space shuttle because that's another problem with a trauma based addiction, it plays out so differentially for everybody. Our addiction is tailor made as a response to the emotional trauma of our past. The pattern of behaviours of sex and love addiction, it means in order to survive we either had to do this to protect ourselves from horrible abuse or we had to do something else as the only source of nurturing and connection available to us and it has become a pattern of behaviour of which we have no power. It is sneaky, I can't do "experience, strength and hope" but a principle will work for anything for anyone whether I was like them or not. And _____ can also tell you there are people in our phone meetings, they come from all different kind of places, their addictions play out in all different kind of ways, my response is always the same, you got a pen and a piece of paper? Are you willing to write down three things you are resentful about and three things you are scared of and read them to me, because the solution is the same. The problem has an infinite number of ways to play out.

My reaction to the process of recovery as an infinite number of ways to play out but it is really helpful to only have six principles because then I have a very very short list of responses to whatever problem I have. I know this is on the fourth step but I want to go back to the, obviously I want to cover a lot of material.

We have this very short list of responses and this is what you are going to see no matter what the problem is, your triggers, you want to act out, you want to get a divorce, you're angry, you're scared, you feel ashamed, you are having problems at work. I will make you a promise. Applying these six highly complete 100% doable things will make whatever is in front of you better. It will reduce your distress, it will give you clarity and it will invite a power to maybe not react in a way that won't work out for you more. I'm not saying that people are going to get struck sober by spending 30 seconds on each of these things but you will start to see a difference. I will give you an example. I've seen this a lot of times. Somebody comes in, they are working on their fourth step and they will say "I'm going to act out, I can't take this" I will say did you read it yet. No no no I'm waiting for my sponsor. I say well you know we invite power by inventorying but we invite power by admitting. If you feel overwhelmed by part of it just take one of the other actions on the list. Why don't you just read me some of it, it doesn't have to be personal, just read me some stuff. She says you mean I can do that now? Yeah, you don't have to wait. Did you read the line that says yeah wait a month until your sponsor is available to enact a spiritual principle, it's not there and so she read me a little bit, she read me a little bit. I mean seriously it didn't take more than five minutes. I said how do you feel now, she said "I feel so much better". I said, then tomorrow you know you have a recovery partner, just read it in little pieces because every time we inventory our resentments and fears we remove something that is blocking us off from God. Every time we read what we wrote to someone who shares our spiritual sickness we remove something else that blocks us off from God. And she was able to make it through all her steps because we cannot necessarily wait until we are all done to get the power of the other actions or we won't make it through the fourth step. I don't think there is any doubt in anybody's mind that a fourth step correlates with long term

sobriety. I'm pretty sure if you stat there, duck duck goose, fourth step, fourth step, sober, sober it correlates but because our fourth step is so painful we may need actually the power of those other principles to survive the fourth step. So like sometimes if somebody says they are working on their fourth step or going through withdrawal either way, I say well do the inventory. I don't talk about prayer much because my experience is people pray, people pray and they relapse, usually I don't hear people writing a ton of inventories and relapse, not often or if they do they get right back on you know. So I say well okay do that. They say still I don't feel very good so I say well let's upload another one which is the reason that we write an eighth and a ninth step, it's not because we are terrible horrible people who did bad things it's not that. It's not because we want to fix our life and you know get it over with. It's not that. Hurting people blocks us off from the power of God and if we admit that and we do what we can to fix it we invite the power of God. That will work whether or not, I'm not talking about your big long ninth step list what I wouldn't even worry about now. Sometimes they say I feel better but I still feel bad. I go okay is there anybody that you have hurt their feelings in the last 24 hours. Maybe you were critical. Maybe you lost your temper. Maybe you did not tip a waitress. And they go well yeah I was kind of irritable with my wife, I was kind of grumpy with the girl at the bank. I say okay, are you open to this, pick up the phone call the girl at the bank and say you know I was disrespectful to you, that's never okay, I want to apologise for that. Is there any way that I can make that up to you. Usually people are all okay. Hang up the phone and see how you feel. See if that angry, ugly I hate my life feeling has dropped. The point of that is not because you really care, you don't have to care about the girl at the bank. You don't have to be trying to fix that for some other motive, In fact it can't be for any other motive. The motive is because you are powerless over your addiction and you need power from God and you are willing to apply one of the basic spiritual principles to get that power. So sometimes that will give people enough power so then they can finish their fourth step and then there is the other one which is service. The point of service.

Those first three are how to get rid of what is blocking us off from God. Service is how to invite more power from God and the principle of service is you help someone who cannot pay you back. Usually you get a lot more power if you help someone else write an inventory, you listen to their inventory, you help them figure out how to make an amend, even a teeny tiny baby one so they can get enough power to not act out, to finish their fourth step or whatever. I will say to people this is a good way to get started, they will ask how do I get started I'm drowning in pain, craving, obsession, compulsion. When you wake up, that little inventory we just did, I always have them do it right there if they are willing because I want them to have the experience of relief. The point of these steps is not to get through them, the point is relief. I will tell you a secret If they are not inviting relief you might want to look at it again because the power will move in so fast, people won't even have to wait minutes. I mean it usually happens right away even after a six line inventory. Then I say this is what I want you to do. I know this sounds like it is not going to do you any good at all. Do you have any friends in the program? Write out three resentments and three fears when you wake up in the morning, read them to your recovery buddy. If they don't pick up the phone just leave it on their voicemail, it will work anyway. It's not about who's on the other end of the phone, it's that you were willing to admit. You did the admitting. It's not about the advice they are going to give you. It's that being willing to do that will invite the power of God. Then go to a meeting and stay after and see if there is a newcomer. If somebody is new give them your number, stay after to be helpful. You can look for somebody to help. People will say I'm just starting and I say I know, nobody needs more power than somebody who is just starting right? I mean the horror of withdrawal is so terrible we need all the power we can get. When I was going through my total

withdrawal I was writing a 10th step, a really strong 4th step every day. I called my sponsor every day. I was chairing two meetings a day. I needed the power. That doesn't mean because I'm a super spiritual person. My addiction is so reality altering. I don't have like this impulse or that impulse, it's not like that. If I don't invite the power of God continually I am in a completely different world where certain behaviours seems like a good idea. There is no way to manage it really.

I want to read you one more summary about step 4 because again people have these ideas about what it is. It is like okay we are going to make this list, we are going to fix ourselves, we are going to talk about all the horrible stuff we did. That's not step 4. That's step 8 and 9. The purpose of step 4 is to get some power from God by writing down and admitting the aspects of self that have blocked you off from God. That's the purpose of it. People say it says what did I do wrong and I say, no it doesn't. Look at how it starts out. It starts out with resentment. Who do we have resentment about? People who hurt us. People who came from a trauma based addiction we are hurt a lot. So this how you start your fourth step. Just start out talking about people who hurt you. Tell me about people who hurt you. I will listen. I will believe you. I will be nice about it. Okay what's the second part of step 4? Fear. Okay tell me everything you are afraid of. Tell me what you're afraid of. I will listen, I will believe you and I will be nice about it. That's 60% of step 4 right there. It doesn't sound so terrible if you put it that way does it. Also people talk about nothing matters but thoroughness but if you look at how Bill Wilson describes our first moral inventory. He actually gives us a lot of leeway and he just uses it as a starting point and this on page 70. He says "If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision, and an inventory of your grosser handicaps, you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."

On that I obviously have underlined, the point of the fourth step is to have God remove whatever self will is blocking us off from him and not only that - He is actually going to help you in this process to remove whatever self will has blocked you off from Him.

This is just a beginning. We don't have to go all the way down to all of these insights. It has commenced, begun, we have just started. Sometimes people say, I say if you can't do a good one, do a bad one because you will get so much power even if all you do is write down three things. Okay write down three and then read it to somebody, and then you're going to get a little bit of power from that and then write down three more. That's the purpose of the fourth step. Not to understand but to get rid of the aspects of self that are blocking us off from the power that we need, the relief that we need to have God come in and relieve our addiction. That's really the purpose of the fourth

step. I mean it's quite clear if you look through the literature that that is what it is. I don't where they get this idea about what it is supposed to be and then they can't do it. Then they don't have enough power and then they get discouraged. I don't want people to get discouraged because all of these principles are 100% doable. Nothing I have described here is impossible. People say I can't do that and I say tell me what can you do and I can help you. I will help you find a way to do one of these things and then that will give you enough power to maybe do the next one and then that will give you enough power to do the next one. I just need a starting place.

I'm going to stop there and if people have questions.

Questions:

What page are the six principles on?

A: 263 -