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FROM THE

Miracles Healing Center

In God All Things Are Possible

Everyone Welcome — Always Open

Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin USA

YOU ARE INVITED TO A

Healing Revival

CONVENTION

He Is Risen

A REUNION CELEBRATION OF

Teachers Of God

A New Dimension Of

Reality Is Realized

A New Continuum Of
Time Has Begun

Welcome To
The Saturday Night
12 Step Meeting

Turning Our Will
and Our Life
Over to the Care of God

“How It Works”

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.

Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves.

There are such unfortunates.

They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way.

They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of

living which demands rigorous honesty.

Their chances are less than average.

There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.

If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it... then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked.

We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not.

With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start.

Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol... cunning, baffling, powerful!

Without help it is too much for us.

But there is One who has all power... that One is God.

May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing.

We stood at the turning point.

We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps that we took, which are

suggested as a program of recovery:

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order!

I can't go through with it."

Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints.

The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.

The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic...

the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

A. That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.

B. That probably no human power

could have removed our alcoholism.

C. That God could and would if He were sought.

[Maggie:] Good evening, everyone. My name is Maggie and I'm a recovered alcoholic. [Hi, Maggie] Welcome to the Saturday night meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Expect a miracle. I'm glad you're here.

I'd like to begin the meeting with a moment of silence.

Okay. And I've asked Michael to read the 24 Hour Book reading for the day.

[Michael:] Hi, my name is Michael and I'm an alcoholic. [Hi, Michael] *Meditation for the Day. God manifests himself in human lives as strength to overcome evil and power to resist temptation. The grace of God is that power which enables a human being to change from a useless, hopeless individual to a useful, normal person. God also manifests himself as love, love for other people, compassion for their problems and a real willingness to help them. The grace of God also manifests itself as peace of mind and serenity of character. We can have plenty of power, love and serenity in our lives if we are willing to ask God for these things each day.*

Prayer of the Day. I pray that I may see God's grace in the strength I receive, the love I know, and the peace I have. I pray that I may be grateful for the things I have received through the grace of God.

[Maggie:] Thank you, Michael. I'd like to read the Preamble for Alcoholics Anonymous. *Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or*

fees for AA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

Okay. And I've asked Chuck A. to read *How It Works* for us.

[[Chuck A.:](#)] I'm going to read *How It Works*. Hi. Hello. My name is Chuck Anderson. I'm an alcoholic. [Hi, Chuck] I've asked permission for the camera to be present in this closed meeting. The first thing I'll say is I will, of course, respect your anonymity.

The feeling of a closed meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous is present in this place, and I can feel it. If you'll tolerate me for just a few moments, I've been around since early this morning, and I've put together a considerable number of 24 hours, whatever in the hell that means. I know it means this: I know it means that the feeling that I am having right now is *exactly* the same feeling the first time that I walked into a meeting. I mean, not necessarily the first couple of times. I was too drunk to have a feeling.

In those days you used to be able to go to meetings when you were drunk. I've been around, I don't know, a long time. Anyway, there weren't a lot of rehab centers. They were just starting. And, you know, if you didn't go to a meeting drunk, when were you going to go to one? You were always drunk, anyway. You had to learn to shut up and not be obtrusive in the meeting. But certainly, if I went and called on a guy or they called on me, I was drunk. I called the answering service, and they came out to see me as a group, and I was drunk. I wouldn't have called the answering service unless I were sober or had such a terrible hangover or just got out of jail or something. There would be some reason.

So the first couple times I went to a meeting, I was drunk. But the first time that I suddenly realized it might be possible for me to actually not indulge in altering my consciousness, that is, not in my continuing long-term dependence on "Mr. Feelgood" or on a way that I could relieve how I felt and was in the

presence of those who shared with me that experience, somewhere I was able to say at that first meeting, "I'm where I belong."

And for those of you who have had and share with me the experiences that I would admit, that I needed Alcoholics Anonymous, if there was one thing I knew that I was going to be able to deal with, it was my addiction. The idea that through the admission of my total inability to deal with my problem was the solution is how I found this program.

One of the reasons that I wanted to talk to you as beginners is first of all, I feel myself as a beginner. There is no manner where, when I just felt the relief that I felt of being able to share with you a common problem in which we found a common solution, I was not happy about it. But I've been looking a little bit, and I don't want to digress from our necessity to look at each other in our association, but in the time that I have spent in the program, the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, I observed over a period of these many years continuing deterioration in the manner and method by which our sobriety has been achieved. And I intend to talk about it.

And I may end up, with your permission, talking just a little bit about some of you there – I'm talking to you now – who find yourself incarcerated in a penal institution, where there are indications statistically that in this country 80% of all the young men and women serving less than ten years in institutions are there because of drug-related problems. Is that true?

[Yes. More. More, I think.]

Even higher than that? 102%, But I want to talk to the guys for a minute about it. And the reason maybe they'll let me talk to them is because – which is true of you guys – you can't con an alkie. A guy who has been successful in overcoming the incredible need to alter your consciousness because you can't stand yourself can understand perfectly well the dilemma being faced by young addicts who began at early ages to sedate themselves and have never actually faced the problem that everyone in this room finally addressed. And *that* was that their problem *was* the booze.

All right, I'm going to say this to you, and the counselor next to you is going to say, "Yes, I know but..." You listen to me, you guys. You have one problem. And this is how I got this program. I could give you every excuse under the sun for why I had to hit a cop and get locked up in jail. The fact of the matter was, I was drunk. Or I can give you every excuse for why I couldn't remember what I had done when I woke up and my car was parked in the garage. I had hung up my suit and went to sleep and woke up and I had absolutely no recollection of it.

So I struggled for a long time with what anyone in their right senses would have recognized immediately as unmanageability. Do you hear what I'm saying, alkies? I know you share this. How do you measure unmanageability if you continue to function? How do you measure unmanageability out there in the street when your entire society is depending on the drug to justify the association, yet they're not in jail and you are?

Now, you'll use all... I'm talking to you there. You're going to use all the excuses that you are offered by the court for the crime that you committed for which you should be punished. And they will include your personal encounters with your family, with your friends, being deprived, being in poor associations, having needs for other things you couldn't find, being part of a lost generation.

You listen to me, you guys in jail. That's nonsense. You are there because you're an addict. You are there because you are powerless over the drug you have been using. No other reason.

I don't want to listen to this con job about "If that hadn't happened, I wouldn't be there." That's not how I got this. I didn't quit drinking because I got cirrhosis of the liver. I quit drinking because I couldn't manage my own life. Cirrhosis didn't stop me from drinking. I drank with cirrhosis.

Did you ever hear of Adabrin? Not Adabrin but Anabuse? [Yes] Did you ever try it? Did you? If you take Anabuse, you can't drink. So what's your solution? Don't take it. If you try to drink with Anabuse, I've got news for you.

I'm digressing a little bit. But you guys, you listen to me. Everyone in this room knows that the fundamental teachings of the spiritual program of Alcoholics Anonymous says you have one problem. What is it, Michael? [Booze] What's the solution? [Don't drink] Don't drink.

Now, to a guy who was like I was, who literally lived to drink and subsequently drank to live, or the guy that has no knowledge of what the world is like and is doing five years for drug abuse, he cannot not believe that his unmanageability can be attributed to the fact that he got caught and arrested and put in jail. Perhaps that is the case. But that is not the solution that I am offering him, and I am speaking from the experience of an addict. And you listen to me.

Addicts? You're different. Half the guys in your gang are never going to go to jail because they do anything. Many of the associations who for a period of many years I drank successfully with are still drinking successfully. I couldn't. That's how I got this. Say, "Of course." [Of course]

Now, obviously, this is what this says. This says that "Half measures are going to avail us nothing, and we must admit that we are powerless over the drug," and this goes back to a lot of letters we are getting from those who are incarcerated. You're in jail. And what brought it to my attention was a news program a couple of days ago from a warden who would not approve a program of recovery in the jail. And the reason he would not approve it was very interesting. He said, "They're incarcerated. They can't drink, anyway. Why do they need the program?"

Shame on you, Warden. Oh, yeah, that's very common. "As long as they're going to be in for five years, why give them a program?" What that is is a misrepresentation of exactly what the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous is to teach you a new way of thinking, you that are in the prison, to show you that there is a solution to the necessity for you to shoot up or consume drugs that has nothing at all to do with the actions that are out there but your certainty that you don't want to do it anymore and that through a spiritual determination, through the steps of this program, there is a solution, as unacceptable as the language may be to you.

As your sponsor, I offer you this: my certainty that if you're incarcerated and you think you might be an addict, you are. Just as when anyone in the world questioned me about whether they were alcoholic, I was virtually certain that they were. There are very few people that really address the idea that they are alcoholic without hiding their need for a couple of doubles in the morning.

So the solution that I have offered and been successful with is very simply my determination that I couldn't solve the problem. And I couldn't solve it because I'm an addict. And under all circumstances, given the opportunity, I would consume alcohol. The idea that I could live my life – I'm talking to you in jail – for many of you who have really looked at it with me, the idea that I could live my life without the sedating effects of alcohol was impossible for me. Those of you who are in the jail, the idea that you would be able to go out and face the world without consuming or without redefining your problem through the use of drugs is very difficult for you.

What I'd like to see happen, and with the help of the guys that are in this room, we intend to inaugurate programs where we can bring back the fundamental idea that the solution to your problem lies in turning your will and your life over to the care of God. That in no way implies that you have to have some sort of "title" for how that's going to turn out.

I've seen many a guy – I'm talking to you in jail – who declared Jesus Christ to be their personal savior and got thrown in jail two days later for being drunk. If that offends you, Christians, I'm sorry. I'm not dealing with the doctrine of Christianity through Jesus Christ. I'm dealing with your inability to manage your own situation, with my certainty that if you don't drug, you can overcome it through a means that we can offer them; that the solution will not only change your life, it will make you happy in the change, because you'll realize that the endless cycle that you were in required that you drug in order to solve the problem that was caused by drugging, and it's an endless chain. Is that true? [Yes]

I don't know if I'm making any sense to you. I'd like to sponsor you. And write us with the names of everyone in this room that would like to take on the idea of offering you a continuing solution while you're there so that you'll begin to apply the hope and faith that we discovered in a solution that was

available to us.

I don't know how much sense that made, but I can assure you of this: I've walked in your shoes. You guys that are locked up? I've been locked up. You guys that are told you're insane? I was told I was insane. Is this true, Morgan? [Yes] There's not anything that could occur in society that all of us in this room had not found the solution through the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

So when the counselor begins to tell you about all the other problems you have besides the booze, the drug, you say, "I don't believe that. I believe that if I don't drug myself, I'm told by successful programmers who have overcome this disease to a faith and a dependency on a Higher Power that if I don't drug, all of my problems will not be solved but they will be solvable. If I drug, I'm never going to be able to solve them, because they'll be retained by my inability to deal with them because I drug, yet I need the drug in order to deal with them." Is that true?

It's a vicious cycle, and my escape from it, or the discovery that coming into this room, you would be willing to share with me your story of unmanageability where we could correspond with each other the manner in which we found the solution, which is how it works through this program...

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not succeed are unable to give themselves entirely to the program. Perhaps they are constitutionally incapable of being honest. You listen to me, guys. There are a lot of counselors in there who are going to tell you you're never going to make it. Don't you believe them. They depend on you requiring sedation in order to counsel you.

And that's enough of that. Hopefully, I've got you to see that you have one problem and one solution. It makes it so simple. My sponsor said to me, and I was giving him all the reasons... I've got more reasons why I had to drink than... It's cunning and baffling.

And the other thing I had to learn that you taught me is that any measures that I

employed except the uncompromising determination not to, would not succeed. Half measures availed me nothing. I could cut down. I could say, “No, I’m not going to.” I could employ all of the techniques that work for everybody else. What I’m telling you – and what we discovered in this room – is it wouldn’t work for us. At that point we looked for others and found them (and this is the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous) of those who shared our problem and had found the solution in the manner in which we found it.

What does it have to do with counseling? Nothing. The discovery that there is a Power greater than myself that would restore me to sanity was an amazing discovery. I can remember waking up... You share this with me in jail. Tomorrow morning, when you wake up, understand that you have plans for a future that will be different than what put you into the institution. Then gather with those who want to share your plans of overcoming the problem through a new way of thinking, an ability that you can evolve to find a solution.

It will give you more than the ability not to consume; it will give you a self-confidence through your capacity to overcome it that you heretofore had not experienced. Is that all right? [Yes] That’s what you read today in the 24 Hour Book. All power comes from God, and the admission that you can’t solve the problem is the admission that He will solve it if you let Him.

Now, I don’t know how the offering for tonight and this talk is different than any AA meeting, except it seems that the last one that I observed in attendance, they were all losers. This program says, “I have recovered and am sharing my recovery.” It doesn’t say, “We came together to share our unsolvable problem.” There’s nothing in Alcoholics Anonymous when I attended that didn’t say, “If you follow our instructions, you will recover.” One day at a time. If you’ll get up in the morning and say, “Today I’m not going to drink. My problem is booze. I’m going to read my 24 Hour Book. I’m going to share the solution with a couple of phone calls during the day to reinforce, should I be tempted.”

And I found that it worked. And I’d been around for a long time, working it a day at a time, because those of you who are incarcerated and certainly those in this room have discovered that working your program or your life intentions a day at a time has made you basically happy and carrying the grievance of your

old intentions that necessitated your sedation no longer tempts you, because when you get up in the morning, you're starting anew. That's the basis of this teaching. Yes or no? [Yes]

All I'm telling you and reinforcing with you, you there in jail or you in jail in your law office or you, doctor, in jail behind your little shoot-ups you're doing, don't kid me. You maintain that you are not unmanageable, where in your heart you know you are. And you're going to spend twenty years proving that you're not, because you feel the stigma of the admission of your inability to deal with the problem. Yet nothing will give you more joy if you'll come and share with us your inability to deal with it, because we can show you that through our inability, through our surrender, through our recognition that there was no alternative, we found the solution.

We don't say, "Amen," at Alcoholics' meetings.

Yes! I live with the solution. And if you're in jail, you can begin to live. I don't care whether it's Jesus Christ. What it is is a Power that is utilizable to me that will relieve me of the necessity to consume alcohol or to drink.

And you guys that are jail, I know that the drug has a different effect on you (particularly if you become more unmanageable) than it has on the people in the gang with you. All the more reason why you must admit that you can't deal with it. That has nothing to do with how happy it made you. It has nothing to do with the relief it gave you. I'm aware of that. As a matter of fact, it gave you more relief than it does the other guy, because you *needed* more relief. Okay?

I want you to see that that admission, that you can't get along without the drug, will help you and that we will help you in the certainty that there's a Power greater than you that will restore you to sanity, and that the help of your determination, when you are released, to go out into the world with that security and seek out others, whether in penitentiaries or attending programs daily or weekly with the certainty that they have found the solution, will make you indescribably happy.

It's like a new lease on life. It's like a discovery that you never thought you could experience. It's like a realization that "I know I can't do what I'm doing, yet I can't stop. I'm desperate. What am I going to do?" This is your solution. Stop comparing yourself with the world. Compare yourself with us. We understand your problem. I understand your problem. Do you think that everybody in this room doesn't know, when they needed a fix, they needed one? Do you think that we don't know that the counselor or the judge or whoever else is going to say, "What's the matter with you, young man? Why is it that you need this?"? You need it because you're an addict. You're different than whatever you think "normal" is. In our minds there's no such thing as "normal."

We are very certain that there is a Power in this universe that will help us if we ask, and that the problems that we have been unable to deal with that have caused us to seek solutions in drugs can be well-addressed and overcome by not using the drug. And if that's difficult for you to understand, keep going through the cycle, because everyone in this room knows that through this program they have found the solution.

What does it require? An uncompromising admission that your life was not manageable. An uncompromising admission that "Something is fundamentally wrong with me," that "I can't solve this problem." It's a coming – with our assistance – to believe that a Power greater than ourselves will restore us to sanity, where before we commit the willful act of violence in order to obtain the drug or under the influence of the drug, we will say, "Wait a minute. I am aware of the consequences that will occur" – not because of the act but (in the vast majority of cases) because of the connection with the drug. All right?

Made a decision... Make a decision to turn your will and your life over to the care of this Power, as you understand it, a decision to say, "I can't deal with this," an *act* of surrender, so that when somebody says to you, "Why don't you buck up?"... No one in an AA meeting, in a genuine 12 Step meeting will say to you, "What's the matter with you? Why don't you buck up and deal with it?" They will be of a fashion where we share together our unmanageability.

The joy that I felt when I came into this room was the sharing of a bonding, the sharing of a common solution, that those of you who are in the penitentiary,

when you come out and go back into your daily lives, if you're accorded the faith in this program, you'll suddenly discover others who have had the same experience. And we want to activate a spiritual program called *A Course in Miracles*. It's not called *A Course in Miracles*. It's called the Alcoholics Anonymous program.

For those of you who don't know where we're speaking, we're at a Miracles Healing Center, where, beginning with turning our will over to God on a continuing basis, offering our service to you as I continue to do and we all do, I find, as we have found on the program, that in order to keep the solution that we discovered, we have to give it away. That's called the Twelfth Step in this program, for those of you who are not familiar with the program. So the Twelfth Step is saying, "We must carry this message in order to enhance our ability to see that we have found the solution through this program."

Now, the beginning of *How It Works* (and this is all past tense) will include passages like *With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start*. Half measures availed us nothing. One shot, one booze, will make us powerless again.

Once you get the hang of this, you'll discover that it gets easier and easier, because the alternative to not drugging will open doors to you that were previously not available. Young guys? Those of you who have never really had a life without the sedation, if you are incarcerated now, find a counselor or we'll come down there. You call us. There's a jail now in California that we're liable to send some guys in. We want to sit down and talk to you, dudes.

You think that somehow you're going to go out and face the same problem. We want to show you that if you find the solution here, for all the reasons that you've been in here, you'll not repeat them when you go out into the world. Why? You'll have found a solution. Is it a spiritual solution? Yes. Were you powerless over the drug? Yes. Did you find the solution through turning your will and your life over to God? [Yes] So that's how it works. [Yes] And *rarely have we seen a person fail who follows our path*. Half measures availed us nothing.

Where you're standing right now, if you want to share this with me – and I'm your sponsor – is at the turning point. You ask for *His* care, this Power, with complete abandon and you'll have the solution, simply because the problem will be solved. And that's a miraculous discovery. And it's a discovery that I made. And it's a discovery that I have been persistent in over a considerable number of 24 hours of sharing with you. And I'm sharing it with everybody in this room right now.

With the maturity of my program in the discovery of the Power, new doors were immediately opened to me, because, first of all, I didn't constantly need to sedate myself in order to justify myself. Those of you who drank successfully, as I did for many years, were always told, "He's going to be all right" or "He can deal with it" or "Your problem is not really heroin. Your problem is get some counseling for your old man beating you." Don't you believe that. Don't you believe that. Your problem is the drug.

I remember my sponsor saying to me, "Don't be ridiculous! You know perfectly well that when you take a shot, you feel a hell of a lot better than you did before. And the idea that you didn't is just crazy. Of course you felt better."

"Well, then just have a couple. You'll be all right. No, just get a little fix."

We all laugh together because we're addicts. And you, out there, you're in jail. Obviously, there may be twenty guys in your gang that do it once in a while that are holding jobs and are very successful. That's not you. And the admission that's not you and that there is a group that understands your problem is going to make you very happy, I think. I hope so.

I don't know whether the age difference and the counseling that you received about the nonsense of various solutions... But if I can show you that everybody in *this* room is certain that their new-found freedom is based on this program, they won't be offering you a variety of capacities for you to deal with your alcoholism.

I don't need to be told there's other methods where you can stay sober. I'm not interested in that. The manner that I'm offering you I know works. And it may also be the manner that's the most difficult for you because there's no compromise in it. *Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked for His care and protection with complete abandon. Here are the steps that we took – past tense – that offered us the solution.*

So we're gathered here at this Miracles Healing Center because we're miracles. And we're sharing with you, there, wherever you are, our certainty that this program works. What did we do? We admitted we were powerless, we believed that there was an alternative and we made a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God.

And now, suddenly, there you are. You're in the institution, and you've decided you're not going to do it anymore. Do you have time to take an inventory of all the things that have caused you to drink? You have plenty of time to do that. Your emphasis doesn't have to be on your inventory. It's perfectly proper for you to review the things that you have done and let them be based on what you really were searching for. And then this program will have a great deal of value to you.

We made a fearless moral inventory of ourselves and We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our difficulty. The idea that you could actually share with another human being and our Creator and yourself the fundamental problem you have in dealing with what the world has told you that you are and that you have accepted that necessitated your need to drug as justification for what the world told you that you are... And the world is wrong.

Young guys in there? The world is wrong about the situation that you find yourself in. The power of decision is in you. Initially it's the confrontation with your inability to deal with the drug, very simply because your problem is the drug. That's what we share in this room, no matter what happened to us. Half of us have been in jail. Half of us have lost our families. Many of us have gone through experiences that very much associate with yours.

Our solution came from admitting we had one problem. Did it solve everything? No, but it opened a door for us to examine what our problems were with a capacity to look directly at them and say that the world couldn't set terms for our solution if the confidence we have gained through this program could not be enhanced and brought more to our attention.

You guys out there? Don't underestimate the power of your new-found capacity not to drug. There isn't anybody in this room. And I'm not concerned about what the world tells you. The world's going to say, "Oh, that's easy to do." It's *not* easy to do. And we can share with you the problem that you had in solving this problem. And that's why we have a program called Alcoholics Anonymous. Okay?

So we're going to share our experience and our faith and hope with you. And wherever you are, watching or listening to this video... And we're directing it particularly to institutions. Obviously, anyone who is powerless over booze and hasn't admitted it has imprisoned himself in a hopeless situation that he does not admit to the world. And there's a lot of you that I'm looking at right now that intend to spend another ten years dealing with a problem that you really can't solve. And it's going to constantly reduce your capacity to really address the true nature of what you can do. And that's too bad, because you are handicapped by your need to sedate yourself.

Judge? Doctor? Lawyer? You can't fool us. We're a fellowship that gets together and admits in this inventory of what we did and the guilt that we feel. But we understand that through our new-found capacity, through our surrender to a Power greater than ourselves, we have found the solution.

These are the steps of the Alcoholics Anonymous program, and all of you, virtually all of you out there, are familiar with them. But I doubt very much if anyone has really told you that this works. All around you are evidences of the failure that it will. You listen to me. It works. It will work. And it's the only thing that will work for you. This program is the only thing that's going to work for you. Is that true for us in this room? [Yes] Is that too uncompromising for some of you?

Those of you who... I don't know how long you've been around. "Well, there's probably another way that I could have found it." That's pure bullshit. The way you found it is this. You found it through a Power greater than yourself, not through your decision-making capacity. That's nonsense. Those of us who have tested our decision-making capacity over a period of many years are very certain that's not how we got this program. That's not how we obtained this happy sobriety. Did I do them all?

...admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the nature of our wrongs; were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character; humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. We made a list of people that we had harmed. As long as you're doing penance, you can call them up and say that you're not going to do it anymore, and don't be afraid to talk about the program. Tell them that you discovered a new way to live that you intend to employ when you get out of the hoosegow. Do you still call it the "hoosegow"? The "klink," or whatever you call it.

The other thing you'll discover is that if you look around, you'll meet associations in the penitentiary that actually share your problem. They're going to express it in a lot of different ways, but the fact is, there's something about the nature of you that makes you unable to deal with the world on the terms that the world requires that you deal with it.

And the doors that will be opened to you when you leave the institution based on this program will be so amazing that you won't believe it. I'll tell you one reason: We'll find you a job. If you work this program – and we can tell – and you come out of the place that you're in, we'll find you a job. And we'll say, "This guy did this in there. He's determined to change his life." Many of us found jobs that way. You know that, and I know that. What could be more down and out than somebody that's where you are, or is somewhere where we were, whether acknowledged to the world or not?

Is it a second chance? You bet. Will it change your mind about yourself? You bet. It's a surprising thing, and the happiness that I want to share with you is my certainty that the feeling of despondency you have right there, now, is exactly what all of us felt, whether we were in jail or not. We were in a jail that we could not escape from and we could not share with the world, just as you

are. *Bars do not a prison make.* What's the next line? [*Nor iron bars a cage*] *Nor* what? [*Iron bars a cage*] Or *iron bars a cage.* Thank you, John. Oh! There's John back there. He's an alkie. One of my old boozing buddies.

You'll discover in the admission of your unmanageability... And I suggest this to you: Do it with anonymity. That means in confidence with each other. That way, you can talk about anything, and we have a responsibility not to disclose it to the world, because we're sharing the solution, not the problem. That doesn't mean you don't tell us about the problem. We know you have problems.

I don't know how much value this will be to you. I know this: These guys gave me a chance, and without this meeting there was no chance for me. Am I all right with that? [Yes] Without what occurred to me, sitting with you, I was hopeless. That's what this says. It requires the experience, and it requires your determination to work it. And it's the admission that your problem has been the drug. So whatever justice you think is being rendered in the institution, or whatever injustices we believe entitled us to the grievance that necessitated us altering our consciousness, using the drug, we're not concerned about.

We do know this: If you don't use the drug, things will get one hell of a lot better than they are. And that by continuing that practice of sharing the common problem, the solution will be obvious to you. Okay?

We'll finish *How It Works*. 11 and 12 I'm going to read to you because this is how we changed our life. Listen. ...*sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.* The idea of God dependency that I am offering you will be a discovery of a Power that you never dreamed of. And your capacity of not defending yourself from this world that seems to be attacking you, based on the power of the growing certainty of your innate sensibility that many of us in this room share...

What we're saying is, if on a day-by-day basis you don't have to sedate yourself; you can do anything in the universe. Can you hear that? The recovery that you experience through the power of God will open doors and make

available to you dreams of careers, plans that you made that were dashed by the simple inability of being unable to perform them, always based on the excuses that you used to keep yourself in a condition of the gratification of your need for the drug.

So everyone in this room... On this video, there's going to be a little place where the counselors if they want to, where those of you who are gathering to share this solution, to write to us. We will have available ex-cons, which we all are. Are you all ex-cons? All of us are basically ex-cons. We were locked in that vicious cycle of the drug. I promise you we'll be available to you, and we'll offer you the love that we want you to accept from us in our certainty that through our love by the solution of the problem we need to help you in order to work our programs.

Can you understand that? We want to help you, because the more we can serve and give, the more certain we can be that we are rendering a service that will help us realize a continuation of the discovery that we have made.

Number 12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.* I don't know what a spiritual awakening is, but everyone that I know who is happy without the need to drug will connect it to a spiritual experience. I don't know what it means to be able to "white-knuckle it out." I don't know what it means to say, "I'm determined not to drink, and I'm going to use the power of my own mind not to do it," first of all, because I couldn't do it, and second, had I been able to do it, I would have remained unhappy for the rest of my life, because I was being denied what I had to have to have my enjoyment.

So what was required of me is that I change my mind about what I really wanted to be. Is this all right? [Yes] It's so fundamental sometimes, I forget what we're actually sharing here. Out there? I don't know what you think of this old guy, sitting here, but I've been doing this a very long time, and I want to show you that sitting next to you is very likely somebody that's going to say, "Why don't we give this a try?"

Look at it as a workshop. Look at it, out there, as an idea of something that you can practice while you're in there. Will you be tested by it when you come out? Of course. Of course. You're going to be tested immediately by it. But the support when you come out will be there, won't it? [Yes] We're going to help them.

Most of the programs that I am speaking of are already in place. But the point of the association of the drug with incarceration has become so big that it needs to be addressed. Is this so? [Yes] So you there? You tell the warden you want to start a program of Alcoholics Anonymous. You want to meet with those that share the problem. And if he tells you you don't need the program because you're going to be there for five years, you tell him to call me.

There's going to be a number... You listen to me. There's going to be a number that appears on the board. All he wants to assure is that you're going to end up back in prison again. He doesn't want to have to deal... He knows that when you go out there, you're going to have to finally face the same problem that's going to bring you right back to him.

I don't know how prevalent that is with institutions. I doubt that it's prevalent. I guess to a human it might make sense, "Why do you need the program when you can't drink, anyway?" All that means is that as soon as you get out, you'll go back to what you were doing. We want to change your mind now. And we will. All right?

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Don't be discouraged. No one here has ever been able remotely to make an entire application to this. We claim spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection. That means I knew this morning that I was not going to take a drug. I could make that decision today, and I knew it would work.

Tonight, when I go to bed, I'll say, "Thank You." And I'll say, "Thank You," because when, in my desperation, I asked for help, I got it and it was you. It wasn't some mysterious antidote that I could take. It wasn't some magic formula that was going to relieve my intense necessity to drug. It came about through sharing the single problem and the single solution. Thank you for listening to me.

Okay, we'll just finish the steps. *The point is, that we were willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection. Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostics, whatever you thought God was doesn't concern us. ...made three things very clear: [that we] were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives; that probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism; and that God could and would if He were sought.*

Does it say, "found"? It says, "sought." It says, "If you really want the solution and you seek it, the solution will be available to you.

And I want to thank you for listening to me on this video. The idea that you're being allowed to see it is an indication that somewhere, if you believe and share with us the idea of miracles, if you'll let this be a miracle for you at this time and in this place, it will open up a whole new door for you.

You trust us with this. We walked in your shoes, so whatever that means, we know what you're going through. We want to help. We have a program that has worked for millions of us, and it always hasn't worked out in front; it's worked by you forming a gang of those who have found the solution through coming together in the privacy. Most of us on the program consider ourselves to be a gang of some sort, and when you meet somebody else out in the world who you know has shared the solution to your problem, you smile and you nod at each other, with no need at all to acknowledge to the world the solution that you found. That's a gang. And it will give you a great deal of joy.

We'll have a little sign we'll design for you, which you can signal to the other guy. What is the one? What do we use? I've run into them in the time that I've been in, and I've run into them everywhere. I can sense by what they say a lot of times. Are you that way? [Yes]

Thank you for sharing this meeting with me and your tolerance for my need to present this particularly to those who are incarcerated. This is a program of recovery that has given us a great deal of new-found faith in what we have found.

I'm going to open up the camera for just a moment to anyone that would like to sit in this chair, who might have something to say to somebody that's in jail. How many of you have been in jail? Okay. How many knew what you were in jail for? Phew! How many in jail again! I don't want you to tell your story. But it would be kind of nice. Everybody's got three minutes. You come and sit, and you look at the camera, and you say, "Hey, you out there? I've been where you are. Come on out and share the solution that we found together." Okay? You want to do it? You're up. Three minutes.

[Paul:] Someone time me. Paul, alcoholic addict. [Hi, Paul] I came to AA 11½ years ago. I've been sober 11½ years.

I started drinking and using when I was fifteen, in New York, and I continued on that way until that behavior got me three months in Project Return in the Bronx and two years in Delancey Street in San Francisco, which was a live-in program for convicts and drug addicts and malcontents, so to speak.

From '85 to '87 I lived there in that place. I combined myself with three hundred people, president and vice president and everything like that, and I was able to stay clean for two years in there. And I went back to college. I did all this stuff, but they didn't have AA in there. They didn't have the solution I needed. So in about the twentieth month of my stay there I came up with this great revelation: I could drink, but I couldn't do drugs, that drugs were my problem, but drinking wasn't.

So after a four-month workout program, I got out of Delancey Street, thinking this period, which was rather a long one, was over in my life. You know what I mean? Eighteen years of it, but I thought it was over. I thought that, you know, I had become docile, I had become tame, that thing that was in me.

And they said that if my life was good enough, I wouldn't want to ruin it, which was the biggest joke I ever had. That's the reason why I *want* to ruin it a lot of times.

So I left, and I remember I was looking for a place to live. All I needed was a new roof over my head, and I could leave Delancey Street. So I found a place in San Francisco, a nice place. I could see both bridges there, and it was pretty inexpensive, and these two girls lived there. And I could afford it, but there was about thirty other people trying to get this place, you know. But I looked pretty good at this time. I had, you know, blue blazer, khaki pants. I had been clean for two years. And I like to say, they rented it to Dr. Jekyll, but Mr. Hyde was going to be moving in, which was exactly what happened.

As soon as I got in there... Dr. Jekyll got me through the door, but as soon as I was in there, Mr. Hyde took over. And I started thinking I was missing out on something. So I went back to one of my old bars, The Rose and Thistle, and went right up to the jukebox, and the same songs that were on there two years before were still on there. I mean, nothing had changed. But I thought I had been missing on a lot. And I ordered the first beer I had in two years.

And what happened was I drank that first beer and nothing happened. You know? The AA police didn't come rushing in. The lights didn't go on. And I ordered a second beer. What happened was halfway through that second beer it wasn't enough, and I wanted more, and my idea of more was cocaine.

And this is what I learned there: When I'm sober, heroin and coke are really far away from me. But if I have a beer, the next thing I'm going to decide is to get high. And that's what happened. And I went on ten-month run from that night on. And I like to use that term very liberally, because it starts out as a run, but after a few months you're walking, and after about seven months you're crawling, and in the tenth month you're being dragged right back to that place.

And I ended up again at that place called "incomprehensibly demoralized." I had just lived two years clean and went to college and everything. I really thought this was over, and I found myself in that same pit that I'd been in before.

And what happened was I ended up in a trailer park in Calistoga, drinking warm Royal Gate Vodka with another guy. And I looked at this guy. I didn't

know who he was. We were waiting for a mutual acquaintance. And he had a big bulbous nose with varicose veins and everything, and I said to myself, "This guy's a bum," you know. But lo and behold, he was looking back at me like I was a bum.

And I was. I was washed up. And that's when life hit me without a glove, so to speak. It just whacked me. And I was washed up. I called Delancey Street. They wouldn't take me back. And I called up a woman, and she drove all the way up from the city, and all the way down to the city, I kept trying to talk her into buying a six pack of talls, a half a gram of coke and some dirty magazines.

But she wouldn't have anything to do with that. And she took me to my first AA meeting, March 21, 1988, and I've been sober ever since. And the only reason why I went to that meeting was, I didn't want to be on the street that night. And that was the deal: "If you go to a meeting, you can stay over here." And that's why I did it. But it doesn't matter what happened or how you got here. It's what happens when you get here.

And I admitted to myself that I had run into that wall and I could not get over it. Some people talk about "hitting a bottom," but when I hit my bottom, I called it "home." You know what I mean? I had been in there for a while. I got used to living pretty bad. I really didn't believe I had the right or whatever to have this freedom, but I admitted to myself I was screwed, totally, and that admittance, that surrender, opened me up to a solution that has worked for 11½ years, and none of my solutions ever worked for more than eleven days. You know what I mean? And they used to end me up in jail.

And it still has a lot of gas now. And it doesn't look like it's going to end tonight. So to me, I found my solution in turning over my will and my life, because I have experienced that I am *not* managerial quality. That's what I'm very clear about. So I just continue to choose that every day. And that's all I want to say. Thanks.

[Chuck A.:] Who is next? Who's next? Go sit there, somebody, somebody that's been in somewhere. Who said in jail? Who else wants to just give? Quick! Come on! Give! We're on camera here. Go ahead. There we go.

[Willem:] Hello, my name's Willem and I'm a recovered alcoholic addict and compulsive gambler. [Hi] And I might as well add the "I'm addicted to misery." I'm recovered from the addiction of misery. Of course I've been a misery addict. Yeah.

I got into a rehab through drinking with another guy in a panel beating shop, and there was thinners available there, which you can actually drink if you're desperate. And the guy that I was drinking with would always leave his bottle when he went to the toilet, and every time he'd go to the toilet, of course I would drink the bottle.

I'll get back to how I got there. I'm a recovered compulsive gambler as well. And near this panel beating workshop was the Sisters of something or other, a Catholic sect of nuns that used to pray for people. And I went there and I asked them to pray for me. And they said, "Well, what's wrong?" And I said, "Well, I drink too much." But I'd like to tell you the truth. What my idea was, I thought, "If I get them to pray for me, maybe the next thought that will come into my head will be the next winner at 25 to 1."

And it's true. That's what I thought in my total madness. And the most wonderful thing happened, which I didn't think was wonderful at all at the time. Two days later I found myself in a rehab. So, you know, I had asked for help. And I got the help. And there you are.

And, you know, now I'm here.

[Maggie:] My name's Maggie. I'm a recovered alcoholic. [Hi, Maggie] And I hit bottom in Paradise, living in my car, which was about to be repossessed. And I remember sitting at the bar and banging my fist on the bar and saying, "What's wrong with me?" And not having a clue that it was the alcohol and the drugs that I was putting into my face. And I thought perhaps I was crazy but not an alcoholic or an addict. Not that.

And I remember my first meeting, coming to a church, which I never thought I would go to. That was the last place that I would go. But in my desperation going to a church and that those folks took me in, they fed me, they let me sleep on a mat on the floor. And having been living in my car for quite some time, that was everything to me. I'll never forget the kindness. And the pastor's secretary happened to be an Alcoholics Anonymous person, and they took me to my first women's meeting, which you would never catch me at a women's meeting.

And the miracle proceeded from there. And today, by the grace of God, one day at a time, I'm sober, I'm happy and I'm awfully grateful.

I want to let you know that I've been where you are. I haven't been locked up that way, but I've been locked up this way. Today I'm free, and with all my heart I want to offer that to you right now, and I want to thank you for this.

[Mike:] Hi, my name's Mike and I'm an alcoholic. [Hi, Mike] Do you know the idea that I'm an alcoholic and different from those who can drink normally is big. And it was a realization that came to me somehow miraculously by having the courage to come into the halls of Alcoholics Anonymous, because prior to that time I thought I was damned or I thought my parents hated me. I thought the social situation was so decadent that I needed to escape from it.

Everything that I did in terms of using a mind-altering substance had to do with an escape from fear, the energy of fear. So I'm addicted to an escape of fear. I'm a fear-based thing. I don't know how to process in my mind energy in a normal capacity. I don't know how to use it in a way that would be other than fearful. I want to run from myself.

I could blame that... You know, I could blame that on anything. I could blame that on everything conceivable and have. I've used all the power that God has given me on Heaven and earth to rationalize and justify my necessity to escape. And all I'm escaping is myself.

And so when I grew up in my gang, everybody drank. And there were twenty

of us that drank together. And there were eighteen of us that are still drinking, and two of us are alcoholics.

Something about me makes me an alcoholic, makes me an addict, makes me compulsive and obsessive to use and escape my own self. "My own self." Listen to me. I'm saying to me, "escape my own self." There's no justification and rationale any more for me because I've been granted a miracle in my life, which is to accept the responsibility for my own life.

So there's a peer pressure, yeah, there's a peer pressure from those of my gang to continue to drink and use, but hey, listen. I've got to admit something to you. I can't do it. I can't drink, and I can't use, because I'm an addict and I'm an alcoholic. I just cannot do it. And when I realized that, things began to change.

And when I walked into my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, I could barely get up the stairs because I was so fearful. And when I walked into the room I had to sit and put my hands on my knees similar to what I'm doing now because they would knock together. It's not a particularly easy thing to do to admit that you have a disease. But this room and millions of rooms or thousands of rooms like this room throughout the world are there, and they're filled with warmth and love and acceptance of who you are.

And all you have to do is walk into that room one time. If you can muster up the courage, I beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start and to walk into the room. Just walk into the room once. And the love that will be there will be undeniable. And you'll never have to go back to your gang. You'll never have to face another peer pressure. You'll just be a day at a time happy, joyous and free.

And if somehow we can extend to you the love that we've been given by ourselves and the grace of God, if somehow that can get through that camera unto you, then you will experience the life and the joy that we have. And this is all I could possibly wish to you.

Give it a try.

[Fred:] Good evening, everyone. My name's Fred, and I'm an alcoholic. It's a pleasure to be here for a moment in time.

When Chuck was speaking, I was saying, "Shit, I didn't get arrested that much." And then I started counting the times and started remembering, "Oh, shit, that one... And oh, yeah, the brig and the California deal, the Mexico deal..." You know. We're crazy. Okay?

I could stop drinking, but I couldn't stop for long. I tried for about twenty-six, twenty-eight years, really thirty-five years. And I just couldn't do it. I couldn't stop drinking until I came into Alcoholics Anonymous at age fifty. Alcoholics Anonymous gave me back my life.

I agree with what Michael said about being a fear-aholic alcoholic. I think that's the basis of a lot of it, the human condition. But I wouldn't know that if I didn't get sober. Alcoholics Anonymous just gave me a life, I heard it last night, "second to none." Second to none. No compromise here. Cut the bullshit. Come into the rooms. We'll help you.

There's nothing but love there, unconditional love in a men's meeting. When you experience that, sixty guys saying, "Yeah, we'll help you. If you'll be serious, make the commitment, we'll help you. We'll help you with anything that you want. We'll pick you up. We'll give you rides, talk to you before and after the meeting, go on commitments."

You know, guys come into this program, and they want to feel like they did that first time they came into the rooms. The first time I came into the rooms, I was scared. I said, "Holy Jeez! What the hell am I getting into?"

The first two weeks I was in a daytime sort of a counseling thing. They said, "You've got to go to three meetings a week." And I did. I kept that commitment.

First AA meeting I went to, I won't get into that. But I was really discouraged the first three. But by the time I did the sixth meeting, I heard somebody speak who had what I wanted. I wanted what he had. And he eventually became my sponsor and he saved my life. I never had a drink after that.

If you are here now in these rooms, you'll never have to drink again. So please come back.

[Chris:] My name's Chris. I'm an alcoholic. [Hi, Chris] And I ended up in jail on a few occasions. And not usually for the bad things I did or things I considered bad. What would happen is I would leave the bar and I'd come to in jail. And like I said, it wasn't for any of the normal things. But I'm really grateful for the last one, because from there I went to detox and... Well, when I was in jail I prayed and I said... I didn't pray to be sober, because I had no idea what sobriety was. I didn't know I wanted to be sober, but I wanted something desperately to change, and I said, "I don't know. I really just can't take this anymore, and I want something to change."

And my prayer was answered with a succession of DUI's. That's what happened, for which I am really grateful. And I ended up in detox. And while I was there, folks from AA came in. And I got goosebumps and I went, "Oh, my goodness! Something's going to change." And through the grace of God and a miracle, something changed, and it was never the same again.

When I left the hospital, I walked out into a world that was entirely different, and I was frightened, and I had no idea. It was like: "This is not the same place." And of course what it was was I was not the same person.

And fortunately there was a gentleman in there who did not stay sober, but he fulfilled his function. He took me to my first meeting at nine o'clock in the morning. And when I walked into the room I took a deep breath, and I said, "This is home. This is where I belong."

I made another meeting at noon and another one at six o'clock, and I was well on my way to what later I termed, "sobriety."

And I'm so grateful. And the thing that... All I can say is I wasn't laughing too much at the end, but as soon as I cleared up and the fog lifted, I began to laugh and I haven't stopped. Thank you.

[Rick:] My name's Rick. I'm an alcoholic. [Hi, Rick] You know, I listened to Chuck talk about unmanageability. When I was a kid... Ever since I was a kid, I've been unmanageable. And when you add alcohol to that, you become more unmanageable.

You know, it took me till I was thirty-five years old to get sober, and I sobered up September 4, '87, so I just had my twelfth year. And, you know, I found along the way that one way to solve an alcohol problem is to switch addictions. You can switch to drugs, which I did. That's like changing seats on the Titanic. Now you've got a window seat, but you're going down. It doesn't make any difference, see. There's a lot of ways you can do that.

And I got to a bottom after seven years of that kind of insanity. I found myself hiding from the police in the ceiling of the Social Security office. And it looked like I was going to do a lot of time. I had been in a lot of jails. That wasn't uncommon for me to be in jail. Spent a lot of time in jails, off and on.

But I came to a place, what Chuck was talking about, where I saw for the first time that I was out of control. People had been telling me all my life that I was out of control. But it didn't matter that they told me. It mattered that *I* saw it. And it took me to a place where I lost everything I valued. And I mean I lost everything that I had any value attached to in my life.

And finally it looked like I was going to prison for a long period of time. And I came to a place in my mind where I saw for the first time that I had lost the ability to choose whether I would do these things or not. I couldn't not do it. I had no choice but to be doing these things to get money, to do whatever I needed to keep supporting the habit. I couldn't not do it. And I saw it for the

first time. I saw that I was out of control.

I got out of there, and I got into a treatment program. I went through withdrawals from a number of different chemicals all at the same time, and I tell you, I never want to experience that again. But I came to a place in my mind where I finally said, when I looked, as I was feeling sorry for myself about my circumstances – my family was gone, my money was gone, my properties, my business, house – I said, “I’ll do anything not to go back on the streets and use chemicals again.” And I really didn’t know what I was getting into when I made this commitment. And it was uncompromising. It really was an idea of being entirely ready to have God take this.

And I was an atheist. I didn’t believe in a Power greater than myself, which is a tough spot. If you make a complete admission that you’re powerless and that your life’s unmanageable, are they just going to lock you up somewhere? Yeah? What else? I mean, if I can’t run my life, who’s going to?

That’s the last thing I wanted to make a statement about, but I was in so much pain that I just made it, wholesale. I said, “I’ll do *anything* not to live like this again.” And when I said it, I started to have an experience that was very spiritual. I was an atheist. It didn’t convert me. At the end of the experience I knew I was different. I didn’t know what happened to me. But I knew something significantly happened.

I’ve never had trouble staying sober since that moment, since I made that commitment. I was still an atheist after the experience, but I know today, as I look back on it, that changed within the next six months. But I know today, as I look back on it, that I entered into a commitment with God – and I didn’t even believe in God.

So belief really didn’t have anything to do with it. What had to do with it was that I make the commitment. See, that’s where... It doesn’t matter what you believe. You can start this thing as an atheist. Or an agnostic.

It says in the book, the ABC’s. *Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to*

the agnostic. Our description of the alcoholic is the first three chapters in the Alcoholics Anonymous book. *The chapter to the agnostic* is Chapter Four. That's the chapter to the guy who doesn't believe, "ag-gnostic," not knowing. He doesn't know.

...and our personal adventures before and after made clear three pertinent ideas, and it's that we're alcoholic, couldn't manage our own lives... I was okay with that. ...that probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism... I didn't like that so good. And that God could and would if He were sought. This was almost impossible for me. But I could make the commitment that I would do anything, and that's when it started.

A lot of things have changed for me since then. I've been involved in the prison system in Minneapolis. I do a couple of meetings at our Stillwater Prison, and twice a month I go out there and I sit with you guys, and we do AA meetings. Unfortunately, as the statistic came out of about probably 85% of the people in there, we get a handful of guys. Most of them don't know they have a problem yet, I guess. But every once and a while something happens and a guy will take a look at this and start the change, and they don't come back.

My police record stopped when I got sober. I haven't been to jail since. I did have a lot of things following me into sobriety that didn't go away right away, but I stayed in the program. See? And eventually solutions to problems unfolded in ways that I never could have even thought of the solution coming from.

See, it wasn't logical. It didn't make sense logically. And I know that there's a lot of fear in the prison system with you guys that literally you think that it has to work out in a certain logical framework. It's not true. It's just not true. The solutions unfolded in ways that shocked me. I couldn't believe it. And that's how my spirituality started to emerge, is I saw that I wasn't solving the problems. Had I been doing my normal solution, I was standing right in the way of the solution coming, which is really an odd thing when you've got atheistic ideas. It broke for me at that point, when I started to see that.

So this is an incredible journey, if you're willing to take it. And I hope you

come along. Thanks.

[Paul:] Hi, I'm a recovered alcoholic. My name is Paul. [Hi, Paul] And all I've got to say is, if you're sick and tired of being sick and tired, join us. We have a solution. It works.

And, you know, thank God for God's grace. It doesn't require my qualifications. God's grace doesn't require my understanding. Like what you said, all I had to do was show up. And that's all it took. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I had nowhere to turn to.

I remember about a month before I got sober, I came out of the docks in an East Boston, Massachusetts, courtroom, and I was on first-name basis with the judge. He looked over and he says, "Paul, don't ask me why I'm doing this, but I'm going to give you a year's probation, and if I see your ass in my court one more time within that year, I'm going to nail you with an habitual offender charge and you're going to do more time than you could even believe possible."

You know, it was... The amazing part about that was... You know, I was afraid of doing jail time because I was 113 pounds, soaking wet. What was more scary, though, was everything with alcohol and drugs, I adapted to shittier and shittier ways of life, and I knew that I'd become adapted to prison. I swore I would never stick needles in my arm, and I drank, and I got drunk and I did it. Everything I swore I would never do, all my... It just deteriorated. And I just knew and I just remembered, like I asked for help and it came.

And I found myself in an AA meeting, and I had no clue. And they told me, "Hey, you want to live, Junior? Put your ass in the chair, take the cotton out of your ears and stick it in your mouth. Sit down. Have a chair. If you want to die, there's a door." And I was just grateful, because it was the first time I heard the truth.

You know, I mean, even my household, my mom was like "Well, you can smoke cigarettes as long as you don't drink. You can drink beer as long as you

don't do whiskey." You know. "You can do whiskey as long as you don't smoke pot." This is true. It kept on continuing because it's a family disease. And, you know, they don't know how to control it. "So you can smoke pot as long as you don't do pills." Well, where do we go from there? "You can do pills as long as you don't do coke. You can do coke as long as you don't do heroin. You can do heroin as long as you don't OD. You can OD as long as you don't die. You can die as long as the neighbors don't find out."

I came to AA, and, you know, it was incredible. It's like an adjustable monkey wrench. It'll fit any size nut. No, I'm just grateful. I mean, look at this. This is God's grace. I'm a miracle. I mean, I can't believe that something that was this dark, that was hell-bent on self-destruction, didn't know anything about love or gratitude or service, was taught that through simply coming and surrendering. And the transformation that took place over... It doesn't matter how long it took, but when it took, it took, and I recognize it, like, "Oh, it started with one simple thing."

Man! I can't. We can. You know... Man! The gratitude in my heart when I think about, you know, it's just incredible, the gift. You know, like I used to have my little expressions, like, you know, "Thank God for AA, and thank AA for God." Because I wish I was an atheist, but I'm a recovering Catholic. I mean, no offense at the Catholics, no offense at the Catholics, but it's just been incredible. And I learned the true meaning of God, and it wasn't about a mediator and it wasn't about an establishment. It was about, it came from the heart, and it came through a singleness of purpose. And that's what I learned in here. Like single focus. Life is life.

And I'm just... Incredible. I've come to know Jesus in my heart and in my mind, which is incredible.

And I'll end with a parable. It's one of my favorite parables, and if Jesus was around, I'm sure he'd tell a parable like this. It's a story about there's a grateful hunchback and a grieving gimp, and they live together. And the grateful hunchback was always happy. He was just happy and joyous to be alive. And the grieving gimp was just angry at life. He had a bum leg. Everything stunk and it sucked and...

So one day the grateful hunchback took a walk just to be in communion with God, and he was walking down the street, and Satan jumps him from behind, and, you know, he says, "Give me all your money."

And the hunchback says, "Well, I'm sorry, sir. I have no money."

And Satan says, "Well, give me all your jewelry."

And the humble hunchback says, "Well, I'm sorry. I have no jewelry."

And Satan says, "Well, what do you got?"

And he says, "Well, all I have is this hunchback."

And Satan says, "Give it to me!"

The hunchback goes, "Wow!" He goes home and he's like all happy, and the grieving gimp says, "What happened to you?" and the hunchback tells him.

And the gimp goes down the alley, and Satan jumps out and says, "Give me all your money."

And the grieving gimp goes, "Piss off! I got no money."

And Satan says, "Well, give me all your jewelry."

And he says, "Piss off! I got no jewelry."

And Satan says, “Well, what do you got?”

“Oh, I got this gimp leg.”

And Satan says, “Well, you won’t mind a hunchback then.”

So I guess the moral of my story would be: a grateful heart is always open for a miracle, and the grieving gimp gets more than he bargained for.

And you know what the incredible part about it is: which one do you want to choose to be? And that’s where the incredible is, like, they’re both me. And I learned in the program, I have done this to myself, and if I just sit still and let go and let God, you know...

And that’s the gratitude. Thank you. I love you.

[Michael:] Thanks, Paul. Hi, my name’s Michael, and I’m an alcoholic. [Hi, Michael] And in about two weeks I’m going to have six months’ sobriety – for the first time in twenty-five years. I’m grateful.

I can tell you something else. About seven months ago, sitting here in this room with many of you, I learned something about AA. I got sober because of that. I learned that I had a place to come where I could ask for help.

And I didn’t have to do something wrong, I didn’t have to do something that I knew was wrong to get it. I could just come, I could be myself, whatever that was, and I could be honest, and I could just say, “I can’t do this.”

And you gave me that. And if I can give that to you – and I have a little story to tell you about that – if I can give that to you tonight, then that’s what this thing is all about. Giving and receiving, it’s the same.

I've spent thirteen hours in jail, but this week I'm going back, and I'm going to spend four months in jail, maybe. And that's okay. The reason I'm going to do that is I stopped... I was drunk, and I stopped to help a State Trooper who didn't really need any help. Go figure.

And I'm grateful for that S.O.B. because I'm here.

And, you know, I'm not supposed to be here. Actually I'm really supposed to be in jail, and I didn't realize it until Chuck said he walked in and sat down and he felt something. So I felt it tonight, too, and I know why I'm here tonight, so that I can tell you that with just six months' sobriety, I'm happy. And I'm happy because this program works. And it can work for me, it can work for everyone that's here, and it certainly can work for you. So come and join us.

[Chuck A.:] Okay, Maggie...

[Maggie:] I want to thank everyone for participating tonight. I want to thank our speaker tonight. I want to thank God, without Whom Which this would not be possible. And I want to ask you all to join me in the Lord's Prayer.

And I'm going to ask Cole if he'll lead us in the Lord's Prayer.

[Cole:] Whose Father?

[All:] *Our Father Who art in Heaven, hallowed by Thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

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