

WEEK #3: Chapter 2 — THERE IS A SOLUTION

[READ: Page 17, Paragraph 1 ➔ Page 17, Paragraph 2]

The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous is a great thing. There is power in people who are supporting each other and the AA fellowship is a very strong support group. It's therapeutic to be among others who have recovered from the same problem. But, we think that fellowship alone would never have held us together in the way we are now joined. This is a very important warning in the Big Book.

Early on, people in this program didn't have a lot of problems with the fellowship, like we have today. The earlier people didn't have much fellowship at all. There were only a few small groups when the Big Book was written: one in New York, a small number in Cleveland and Akron Ohio, and a few other groups scattered around here and there. So you see, they could not go to 90 meetings in 90 days. **They had to work the real program directly out of the Big Book.**

Today we have a much larger A.A. fellowship. You could just go around "fellowshipping" and never work the program suggested in the Big Book. You can just live off the fellowship, but you can't get and stay sober from the fellowship alone because **the vital spiritual experience comes from the action outlined in the first 164 pages of the Big Book.** The fellowship alone will not change your life. Some people say "Go to 90 meetings in 90 days and you'll get sober". Well, you may get DRY from alcohol, but you don't recover from the "**DIS-EASE**". You can no more get sober, than you can become a parent by going to 90 PTA meetings for 90 days. **You have to take some steps.**

[READ: Page 17, Paragraph 3]

Here, Bill is saying, "**fellowship is not enough**". He said, "**The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution.**" The *common problem* is a great bond, but he said the real thing is this **common solution**. The Big Book carries the great message of the **common solution**. Later on it is revealed that the **common solution to alcoholism is a vital spiritual experience.**

We determined from the first part of the Big Book that we are powerless. In this part of the book, he writes the prescription. The prescription is **Power**, and Bill tells us the power of the fellowship and the power of the common solution will overcome any person's powerlessness over alcohol.

Anyone can get sober, but the real questions are: "*How do you stay sober?*" "*How do you change?*" "*How do you learn to live in such a manner that you are able to stay sober in the future?*"

Bill warns us, that even though the fellowship is one of the powerful elements in the cement that binds us together, that alone is not enough. The great fact is that we need both elements for recovery, the same two things Bill needed to have in order to recover.

1. **The fellowship** (Bill had with Ebby)
2. **The practical program of action**, which led him to the vital **spiritual experience**.

This is the real SOLUTION to the disease of alcoholism.

[READ: Page 18, Paragraph 1 ➔ Page 23, Paragraph 2]

There is no way that I can trigger my allergy, produce the **phenomenon of craving**, end up drunk, sick and in trouble if I don't take the first drink. That makes good sense to me.

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"Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic is centered in the mind rather than in the body." The fact that I'm allergic to alcohol is important for me to understand, but the real problem centers in the mind rather than the body. **All action is born in thought!** There is no way that I can drink, unless my mind tells me that it's OK to take a drink.

"There is the obsession that somehow, someday, we will beat the game." Here is the word, "**obsession**", now entering into the picture. The great obsession of every alcoholic is to drink like normal people. This is the great lie that we believe that someday, somehow, we are going to be able to beat the game. We actually believe a lie and based on the lie, we make a decision to take a drink. We take the drink and that triggers the allergy and then we can't stop.

The real problem centers in the mind rather than the body.

[READ: Page 23, Paragraph 3 → Page 25, top of page]

"We are without defense against the first drink." If we could only remember what a drink does to us... if only we could remember the jail houses, the divorce courts, the hospitals, the humiliations, the pain and sufferings of the last drunk... we wouldn't take a drink. But we can't remember with sufficient force to keep us from taking the first drink. The mind will give us some excuse to take it. **"There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps us from putting our hand on a hot stove."** Alcohol is like a hot stove... it has burned us over and over again. We are strangely insane when it comes to alcohol.

If we have "**placed ourselves beyond human aid**", then the AA fellowship alone will not bring about recovery from the disease of alcoholism, because the fellowship is made up of a bunch of human beings who are just as powerless as I am. Recovery will have to come through something other than human power.

[READ Page 25, Paragraph 1 "There is a Solution" → Page 25, Paragraph 2]

[READ: Page 567, "Appendix II – Spiritual Experience"]

I've learned a couple of things by reading this appendix. My concept of a **Spiritual Experience** is not at all what I had when I first read this book. This is an entirely different concept. I've learned that it doesn't make any difference whether it is a Spiritual Experience or a Spiritual Awakening, either one can occur. One is slow and one is fast, but the end result will be **I've tapped an unsuspected inner resource** of strength, which I identify as "**a Power greater than human power**"...or..."**God as I understand Him**". This is a key statement that we need, remember, because later on we are going to look at this **unsuspected inner resource** of strength.

The one key word in the entire appendix is "**CHANGE**". Bill is the kind of writer that repeats himself over and over. A good writer uses different words to repeat himself. Notice on p.567, he uses the word "**change**" in many different ways. In the 1st paragraph he talked about a "**personality change sufficient to bring about recovery**". In the 2nd paragraph he again said "**personality changes... in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals.**" An "upheaval" is a "change". In the 3rd paragraph he talks about "**revolutionary changes**" To "revolutionize" is to "change something entirely". Here he also talks about "**an immediate and overwhelming "God-consciousness"**". To overwhelm something is to change it, "**a vast change in feeling and outlook**". In the 4th paragraph first sentence, he talks about "**transformations**". To "transform" is to "change". In the middle of this paragraph he talks about "**profound alterations**". To "alter" is also to "change". **So the key word in this vital spiritual experience is to CHANGE our personality.**

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When we get to AA we are usually **restless, irritable and discontented**. We come in filled with **shame, fear, guilt and remorse**. That is our personality when we enter AA. If we want to stay sober, we need to find a new way to live. We are going to have to **change** our personality, and become peaceful, happy, serene, useful, and helpful human beings. The **fellowship** alone will not bring this **change** in us without the **practical program of action** that is outlined in the first 164 pages of the Big Book. It's the combination of both that brings about the vital **spiritual experience**.

We are told in the Big Book there are **TWO POWERS**. One is the **fellowship** (which supports us) the other is in the common solution which is the **practical program of action** (which changes us), and which will give us the vital **spiritual experience**. We need both powers in order to recover. It is doubtful that any of us are going to recover without the fellowship. But we also doubt if any of us will recover without the vital spiritual experience.

[READ: Page 25, Paragraph 3 → Page 26, top of page]

The only two alternatives we have are: 1) **To go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we can**; or 2) **Accept spiritual help**.

A good textbook never tells you something without giving you a good example of it. The DOCTOR'S OPINION was followed by BILL'S STORY, wherein lies the perfect example of alcoholism. He has now told us of the need for the vital **spiritual experience**. On page 26, we see an example of a fellow who had this vital spiritual experience and where the idea came from; his name was Rowland Hazard. He was the man that went to the judge and got Ebby Thatcher released to his custody.

[REFER TO CHART/DIAGRAM: "What Is the Solution?" Page 28]

[READ: Page 26, Paragraph 1 → Page 27, Paragraph 4]

Dr. Carl Jung, a celebrated psychiatrist, gave Rowland the solution, a vital **spiritual experience**. Rowland came back to New York and got involved in the Oxford Group program. By using their Steps and their program of action, he was able to find his power and recover.

Now we can see where the Steps came from. The First Step came from Dr. Silkworth, a non-alcoholic. The Second Step came from Dr. Carl Jung, another non-alcoholic. Rowland Hazard got in the Oxford Group, a group of non-alcoholics. The strange thing is how God used all these non-alcoholic people to put this program together. Bill was the key figure that put all these ideas into our program of action, but Bill did not create any of these Steps. Bill's mind was used by God as a vessel to put all these ideas together, to bring us the program we know today.

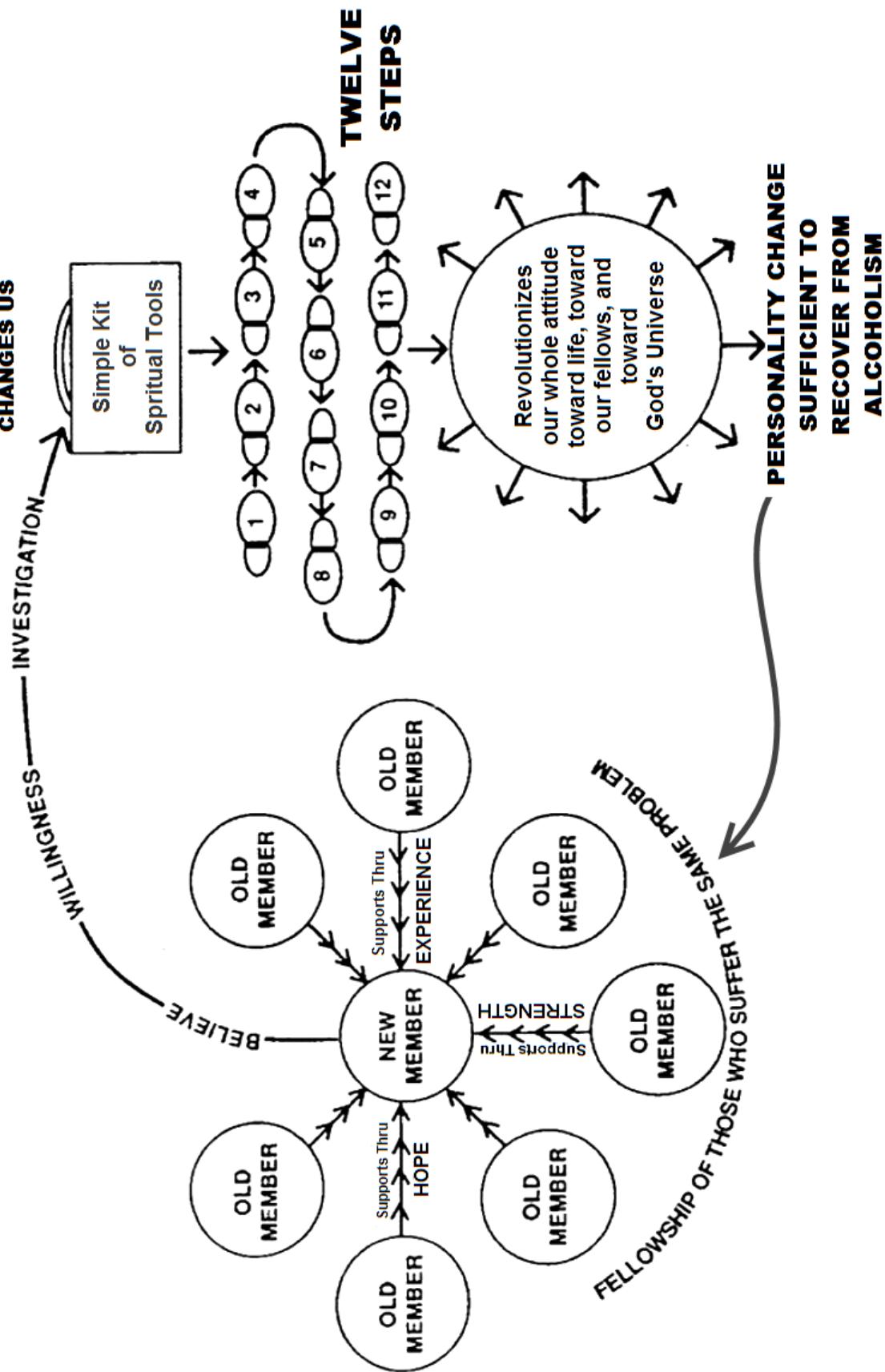
[READ: Page 27, Paragraph 4 → Page 29, Paragraph 1]

"Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered." We have previously seen these words **precisely, specifically**, and now we see the words **clear-cut**. This does not sound like "cafeteria-style" to us. It doesn't sound like you take what you want and leave the rest. They are telling us exactly what they had to do in order to recover from the disease of alcoholism. The things we have learned up to this point are the things they had to learn in order to recover, i.e. *obtain sobriety*.

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

FELLOWSHIP
SUPPORTS US

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE OR
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



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BIG BOOK WORKSHOP HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- 1)** Read “**STEP TWO**” in the “Twelve and Twelve” book – USE HIGHLIGHTER!
- 2)** Read Chapter 3 “**More About Alcoholism**” in the “Big Book” (1st time) – USE HIGHLIGHTER!
(Just read and highlight the 1st time you read through the chapter.)
- 3)** Read Chapter 3 “**More About Alcoholism**” in the “Big Book” (2nd time).
Answer the “Work Assignment Questions” below as you read the chapter for the 2nd time.
- 4)** Does your writing in your book list those things you attempted to do to control your use of alcohol and your failures? Be prepared to discuss how it applies in your life.

WORK ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS "MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM"

*Always Write
an Example!!*

[PAGE 30]

1. Have you been unwilling to admit you are a real alcoholic? Are you bodily and mentally different?
2. Has your drinking career been characterized by countless vain attempts to prove you can drink like other people?
3. Have you suffered from the obsession that somehow, someday, you can control and enjoy your drinking?
4. Was the persistence of this illusion astonishing? Did you pursue it into the gates of insanity or death?
5. Have you learned that you have to fully concede to your innermost self that you are alcoholic? Is this the first step in recovery?
6. Do you believe the delusion that you are like other people or presently may be has to be smashed?
7. Do you believe that you will ever recover control? Did you at times feel you were regaining control but were such intervals usually brief and inevitably followed by still less control which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization?
8. Are you convinced you were in the grip of a progressive illness and over any considerable period of time you got worse and never better?

*Always Write
an Example!!*

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WORK ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS (Continued)

"MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM"

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1. Does there appear to be any kind of treatment which will make you like other people?
2. Do you believe there is such a thing as making a normal drinker out of an alcoholic?
3. By every form of self-deception and experimentation, have you tried to prove yourself an exception to the rule, therefore non-alcoholic?
4. Have you tried long enough and hard enough to drink like other people? What are some of the methods you have tried?

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1. To get a full knowledge of your condition (if there were no other way to find out) would you be willing to consider the idea of diagnosing yourself and trying some controlled drinking? Trying to drink and stopping abruptly; trying it more than once?
2. Do you believe that a long period of sobriety and self-discipline would qualify you to drink like other people?
3. Do you believe that by gathering all your forces, you could stop altogether?

[PAGE 33]

1. Do you believe that to stop drinking, there must be no reservations of any kind, or any lurking notion that someday you will be immune to alcohol?
2. Can you stay stopped on your own willpower?

[PAGE 34]

1. Do you desire to stop altogether and can you do that on a non-spiritual basis? Have you lost the power to choose whether you will drink or not drink?
2. No matter how great the necessity or wish, can you leave it alone (stay stopped)?

[PAGE 35]

1. Do you believe that the crux of your problem is the mental state, which would precede a relapse into drinking?
2. Do you believe that if you fail to increase your spiritual life, you will drink again?

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1. During your drinking, did your sound thinking fail to hold you in check and an insane idea won out?

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WORK ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS (Continued)
"MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM"

*Always Write
an Example!!*

[PAGE 38]

1. However intelligent you may have been in other respects, where alcohol was involved, were you strangely insane?

[PAGE 39]

1. Do you believe you could stay stopped on the basis of self-knowledge alone?

[PAGE 42]

1. Do you have an alcoholic mind and do you believe that the time and place will come that you will drink again?
2. Do you believe this problem has you hopelessly defeated? Has this process snuffed out the last flicker of conviction that you could do the job yourself?
3. Do you believe that you will have to throw several lifelong conceptions out the window to go through with the program of action?
4. Have you discovered that spiritual principals will solve all your problems?

[PAGE 43]

1. Is there any doubt in your mind that you are 100% hopeless apart from divine help and is there any other solution?
2. Do you believe that at certain times you will have no effective mental defense against the first drink and neither you nor any other human being can provide that defense? Must your defense come from a Higher Power?