

Harold L. — The Big Delusions Workshop

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Introduction

Well, good morning everybody. My name is Harold. I'm an alcoholic. It's great to be with you.

I was here last night, so some of you I met last night. And some of you may have been here for the first time. But welcome to the roundup. If you're new to Alcoholics Anonymous, welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous.

We're glad that you're here. And, uh, hopefully you got a chance to hear Katie. Katie's a great friend of mine. Her husband, Charlie, was a dear friend of mine, and Mark, who she referred was a friend of mine.

So all, all great, great people, great, uh, communicators in our fellowship. Uh, she's a firecracker, for sure. And she'll be back here in a minute. She had to run over and get another adjustment on her back across the street at the chiropractor.

Um, but I'm glad you're here. I have this Friday of April seventh, nineteen eighty seven. Uh, my home groups in Saint Louis, Missouri, it's called a on the rocks strong three legacy group. If you're ever in Saint Louis, I hope you look us up on the meeting guide app or get Ahold of me directly.

And we'd love to host you. We'd love for you to come out. If we get Ahold of you quick enough, we will put you to work. We'll get some mileage out of your sobriety, I can promise you.

Uh, we're gonna have a party there in twenty thirty. Um, you know, the international will be there. And so if you're going to come to Saint Louis, I would encourage you, if you're if your schedule and finances allow to come in an extra day early on Wednesday because the conglomerate, a collaboration on the rocks and some other aid groups will have a pre-party party that will be worth participating in, I can promise you. And you want to be a part of that if you can do that.

Uh, I've been asked to do a workshop on the big delusions, and I'll give a little background on where that workshop came from, and then I'll dive into it in a time that we have. Um, the big Delusions workshop is a workshop that was born out of the Department of Corrections, um, back in the nineties. I do a lot of work with the D o C and the lady who was in charge of probation and parole for the state of Missouri, her name was Nancy. Nancy would go on to become a non alcoholic trustee for Alcoholics Anonymous.

And she just she served six years. She just went off a few years ago off the board, did a lot of great things for our fellowship. But at that time, in the nineties, I sponsored her brother and her brother. Michael was a great member of AA.

Unfortunately, he passed away due to brain cancer, but I had a great relationship with Nancy and coming from that world, both as a consumer, but also being involved in the VOC, uh, doing recovery inside those spaces.

She asked me one day, she says, can you come and do, uh, some workshops, uh, for probation and parole officers around, you know, the, the, the subject of alcoholism on a level that really helps them be more effective with the person that they're working with, with their clientele, the, the person that's on probation and parole because recidivism rates are high in the United States, sixty, seventy percent of people that that suffer from alcoholism and addiction, once they get out will return. And after nine

years, it goes closer to eighty, almost ninety percent. So almost a guarantee that they're going to go back.

So the goal of the workshop was how do we how can you help write a workshop that will help them understand who they're sitting with? Not not from a perspective of twelve steps and go to meetings and work and those type of things. But a deeper understanding of why that there's such a fallout rate. Why is it so hard for an alcoholic to, to get sober and stay sober and go on to live a vibrant life that they were always created to live?

And so I was tasked with that. And this workshop would start out as the five big lies of alcoholism. Today. It's call it the big delusion.

And I've done this workshop in a variety of contexts, you know, from professional contacts to, to religious context to a secular context to right here where we're at today in Alcoholics Anonymous. So I will be doing this workshop in a short time. We have it'll be a firehose, but it'll be one hundred percent from this big book of Alcoholics Anonymous that we talk about it. But I want to talk about six big delusions, and I'll go ahead and name them up front, but then I'll tap on each one of them.

I could easily do an hour and a half on each one of these delusions without blinking my eyes. So we're going to move fast through this.

But here are the six big delusions.

1. Delusion number one the Delusion of inequality.
2. Number two delusion is the delusion I'm not an alcoholic. I'm not what? All the evidence says that I am.
3. Delusion number three is the delusion of victimization.
4. Delusion number four is the delusion of impossibility.
5. Delusion Number five is delusion of spiritual disqualification.
6. And number six is the delusion that there's no real purpose for my life.

And those will be what I hit pretty fast and pretty hard.

Delusion 1: Inequality

And the first delusion and Katie referred to it. And I'll refer to pages, not necessarily read them for the sake of time, but on page sixty one, Katie referred to this twice when she gave her workshop. The delusion that I could rest satisfaction out of this world if I can only manage it well. And so the delusion of inequality.

You know, I said it last night when I shared that there's hardly a person that stands behind this podium and recovery. That doesn't say something to the fact that when I started out in life, as far back as I can remember, I never really felt like I was a part of what was going on. There was some form of separation. There was an angst in my life.

I felt like a square peg trying to fit in a round hole. I felt like everybody else had the answers to the quiz but me. I felt like I was, a day later, a dollar short. I felt like everybody else knew their lines but me.

Everybody else had the answers to the quiz ahead of me. You know, they're just trying to describe this cavity that we have in our life. I would call that the delusion of inequality, the delusion that who I am is not enough. And if I'm honest with that, if I just sat with that and wrote inventory just on that, that that alone you could write for hours.

And this delusions obviously appears long before we ever start using or abusing anything, but it's what really drove my life. I mean, in summary, it was almost a cognitive dissonance between my ears

because there was just two things going on at the same time all the time. As far back as I can remember, I could walk into a space like this and two things at the same time. Pardon me.

Wants everybody to pay attention to me. You know, just acknowledge me. Give me a wink. Give me a fist pump.

Give me a hug. Just acknowledge me. Let me know that we're okay. And at the same time, there's another part of me wants everybody just to leave me the hell alone.

And it's going on at the same time. If you just come up, if everybody just walk up and go, hey, we think you're awesome and never talk to me, the rest of the weekend would be great, you know? You know, it would be a great way, but it's not reality, right? And so comparing myself to where everything else is going, it's not always a negative thing.

It's not always an inferior complex. It could be superior. I could literally go from a hero to a zero in a matter of seconds, numerous times throughout one day. And this is driving my life, and I have no idea.

That's what's driving my life and it's our culture that does it for us. You know, it isn't just us. It isn't like we're just born this defective. I believe every human being suffers from this separation. At some level, it's just part of the human condition.

But alcoholics are an extreme version of this, and there's lots of books written by lots of smart people around it. Probably one of the better ones is from an old Canadian philosopher. His name was Charles Taylor, wrote a book called sources of the self. It's a magistrate book.

It's really written for philosophers, six hundred pages. But in summary, what he would what he would call the human condition is the fracture itself. And this fractured self is really I can totally identify with that fracture. You can call it separation.

So if there's a person, because we have in the world of recovery, we have both people sitting here, we have people of faith and we have people of reason. And if you're a person of faith, I would just for me, I would call it spiritual separation. You know, when they define the root of the problem is selfishness and self-centeredness. Katie lifted it up that we're an extreme version of that, although we usually don't think so, that that separation, that spiritual separation being the root of the issue, I would that's what I would call it.

If you're not a person of faith, just called a separation that I'm not connected with what's going on in the bigger cosmos, if you will. I'm just not connected to you. I'm not connected to the world system. There's some disconnect.

Call it the great disconnect, if you will. And this this drove my life. And the reality of it is full transparency. I think with yourselves as well.

It can still drive my life today. Prior to recovery, what you thought of me paralyzed me. I absolutely changed my entire life. I shared some of those stories last night.

I don't have time to go into all those today, but but it drove my life. I would literally, I can promise you every piercing and I'm speaking for myself right now, and all I have to share is what I've seen, what I've heard, what I experienced, but what I'm sharing right now, it's just for me. But I can promise you every piercing, every scar, and every tattoo that I possess comes from that delusion. Every one of them, if I honestly, why did I get this tattoo?

Why did I get this scar? How did I get this scar? Why do I got this piercing? And I can draw it back because I just wanted to fit in.

I wanted to be a part of what was going on around me. And it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just culturally influencing me. But there was no I had no identity other than that my surroundings.

And so what you thought of me paralyzed me. I was never okay. I was always comparing myself to everybody. Everything around me.

And I come up short all the time. And as my life got hard, as I started to separate myself from the normal class of people and fall into dark behaviors and dark habits, and then all of a sudden the influences, behavior, and substances started to come in my life and I started to really burn my life to the ground. I started getting labels. We'll just put that even deeper on steroids and social media, put that on steroids.

I mean, there's, there's literally who knows how many people around the globe tonight, today, tonight, whatever time zone you're in that will commit self-harm because they didn't get enough likes, they didn't get enough views, they didn't get enough attention. And this is the culture we live in. We live in a culture that breeds this from the time we're this little you're asked this question, what do you want to be when you grow up? And most cultures around the world, your culture, your setting, your context describes who you're going to be.

Your family tells you who you're going to be. They give you self-worth. They give you self-esteem. They pour in all the resources you need to become that.

And most spaces on the on the planet, that's what happens. But in the Western culture, culture, when we get to decide who we're going to be and what we're going to do, and that sets us up for a lot of stuff. And so we create. I want to be a rock and roll star.

I want sex, drugs and rock n roll. That's what I want to be. I want swimsuit issue, girl. I want to ride a chopper.

I want to play drums. I want to look like Peter Criss. I have a lot of money. I want to do what I want, when I want, how I want, the way I want.

If you don't like it, jump in a lake. That was my M.O. that was my model for life. And not only did I need people to affirm it, I demanded they do it. Obviously, I was in friction with everybody and everything my whole life, but it drove my life.

It absolutely drove my life. When I would show up in Alcoholics Anonymous and you hear the word fear. I would have told you I'm not afraid of anything, and I would have fought you for it in two seconds. I would have fought you for that, to prove that I was not afraid of anything.

But this is how deep the delusion goes. And I'll give you a great example. When I got sentenced for the first time and I'm being taken away a ward of the court at this point, and I'm put in the card, I'm being taken to northern to part of Missouri, to an all guys camp. First time ever being separated from anything.

I'm going to this all guys camp. This is what this delusion looks like in real life. You know, as it's working in my mind, I'm in the back of this car and this mind of mine says, you know, we can't go to an all guys camp with the name Harold. The name Harold Sucks.

And I started thinking about that. It's like the voice just shuts up and let you sit with that. So I'm sitting with that and I'm trying to think, who do I know named Harold? My dad's name was Harold, but he didn't go by it.

I knew he went by Jerry. I don't know why he went by, Jerry. I do today, which is what we're talking about. Why he went by Jerry.

But I didn't know that at the time. But there was nobody. I mean, there was nobody on TV. There was nobody in Rambo named Harold.

There's nobody in Rocky named Harold. There's nobody in Fifty Shades of Gray named Harold. There's nobody in Roadhouse named Harold. There's nobody named Harold and nothing cool.

The only thing that was on TV when I was a kid that had Harold in it was on Saturday mornings. It was a cartoon called Fat Albert. Hey hey hey. Right.

And who was the dumbest guy in that show? Yeah, you know it. Oh, we're Harold. Not just Harold.

Oh, we're Harold. That was it. That was the only reference. Now, other.

My middle name was Eugene. You can't be a badass with the name Eugene. Guaranteed. Almost a guaranteed ass whippin if you go to an all guys camp.

And my last name is. Long as you take that acronym, it spells hell. And it's like, that's what I have. But by the time I got off the exit, I changed my name to Jeffrey Alan Long, and that's what I stayed until I came to Alcoholics Anonymous.

But I would have told you I wasn't afraid of anything when I got here. That's the power of this delusion. And if I'm not spiritually centered, if I'm not living a principled way of life that delusions as much as I can talk about it, articulate it, write about it, can still drive my life today. I can still walk into a space like this and feel like I'm on an island by myself, comparing myself to everybody.

I'm inferior. I'm superior. I'm this, I'm that. I'm a hero to a zero.

All within a matter of seconds. Be totally isolated. Sit in a room full of people. With all this stuff going on between my ears.

And it's still very much relevant today. For the time I'm this. I'm too tall, I'm too short. I'm too fat.

I'm too skinny. I'm too this, I'm too that. Go on down the line. All the comparisons we make in our life.

And if you're comparing yourself to something, there's no satisfaction that ever comes from it. However, whether I think I'm better than or less than, I lose every time, and so do you immediately. But yet my mind just wants to go there just by default. It's our culture.

But it was it's a very unhealthy way to live. And it's and it's why I loved alcohol because that care, boredom and worry. It's. Page one hundred fifty one would suggest.

And this is why we really like to drink because it suppresses. It takes away the cardboard and the worry in my life. And it did. It took away that it's when you hear talks like, you know, you hear people say, when I drank, I felt like I was six foot tall and bulletproof.

I felt like I could dance, I felt like I could sing, I felt like I could fight, I felt like I could do all these things that I was suppressed from doing. Why was I suppressed? Because this stuff, this one hundred forms of fear, self-pity, self-delusion, drive, and delusion is the key word here. Drive of my life.

You know, because I'm fabricating all these things in my mind of how you see me, how I see you, and if I if all honesty, if you had to put a price tag to what that delusion has cost me, I probably wouldn't even want to be in the room. When you throw it up on the board, The opportunities that I squandered are things I quit, the things I walked away from because of that delusion. I mean, it just goes on long before I ever drank. I mean, this this delusion owned the title of my life.

That who I am just as I am is not enough. Yeah. The label alcoholic on it. Liar.

Thief in chief. On top of that. Now that delusion gets really, really thick. And so you're sitting in trying to get sober in your life and you're in recovery and you're this is underneath, in a subconscious way, driving your life.

And so that's, that's huge.

Delusion 2: "I'm Not an Alcoholic"

And everything else I'm going to talk about just builds off of that. But then you get into the delusion, I'm not with all the evidence says that I am. I'm not an alcoholic, which will kill most people that have this illness. You know it.

You know it. Well, I'm preaching to the choir, but it's hard to statistically realize that they estimate in today's world that one out of three people have directly in their family dynamic, somebody who suffer from alcoholism. One out of three. So if there's nine billion people, that's three billion people in the world.

You Google a a there's just a few million of us. We'll be we'll just stretch that and say there's ten million of us in a. But there's not that many. But let's just say there is.

Compare that to three billion people. I mean, that's the reality. Ninety percent of the people that suffer from alcoholism will never be here. Ever be here.

They'll never sit in a room like this. They'll never be in treatment. They'll never be exposed to it. Ninety percent and a ten percent US.

Obviously, very few of us will stay. And a reason a lot of us will stay. There's a lot of what Katie lifted up just talking about, you know what's really the root of the problem? One of my friends, Mary, says it this way, and I think it's right.

She would say, if you have if alcohol is your problem, you're probably not an alcoholic. And you probably don't have alcoholism because alcohol is really your problem. You just quit drinking. Life gets great.

Just take off. He would just get back on track. He'd get on the beam. He would just ride the coast of life and he would be an amazing outcome.

And I think that's true because it's so much deeper than booze. You know, in our life and the easy formation. And Katie lifted this up too, is all I gotta do is I just need to stop drinking. And the people that don't understand it, that's their resolution.

Why don't you just stop drinking? But but the reason I don't stop drinking, and the reason I don't want to confess it, concede it. It's just what it tells us on page thirty, which could be the Gettysburg Address, if you would, for alcoholism. And most of you know it well, but but listen to these couple paragraphs and this is page thirty.

Most of us big capital letters, all cap letters, first three words. Most of us have been unwilling to admit we're real alcoholics. And you can just ask the question, why? Why were we unwilling to do that?

Well, it's because that first solution, because I'm not enough. And when I drink, I feel like I'm okay, I the worry lessens. I can cope with life. That's why no person likes to think he's any different from his fellows.

Therefore, it's not surprising that our drinking careers, which I think that's always this great language, like it's a career. We set out to do this as being characterized by countless vain attempts that we can prove we can drink like other people, countless failed attempts, the idea that somehow, someday he will enjoy and control his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker and listen to the words. The persistence of this illusion was just synonymous with delusion. It's astonishing that many will pursue it into the gates of insanity, literally drank himself to death over time, and then go on the next page, page thirty one.

It says, despite all we can say, many who are alcoholics are not going to believe they are in this class by every form of self-deception and experimentation. They will try to prove themselves. The exception

to the rule, therefore not alcoholic, and the progression of that. The progression of alcoholism is so subtle.

All the evidence is there for everybody who cares about you. When you stand in front of the judge one more time, the judge says, man, I told you what was going to happen to you if you came back here. Why in the world are you standing in front of my courtroom again? Why are you here?

And you're sitting there, and your best answer is, I don't know. You're sitting where the people you love, your spouse, your partner, your significant other, your children. Maybe I thought you said you loved us. I thought you said you loved us.

Why are you doing this to yourself? Why are you doing this to us? And your best answer is, I don't know. I'm doing it.

Your job, your boss, your HR department, I told you you were on a no drink, no drug clause contract, and you just tested positive one more time. You're forcing my hand here. Why are you doing that? And our best answer is I just, I don't know.

And we're powerless. But it's way past the mental obsession and the physical allergy. Because once, once you if you quit abusing alcohol long enough, the mental obsession, the physical allergy is going to cease. But you're left with the malady, this disconnect, this delusion of inequality, this delusion that I am not enough, that I can rest satisfaction.

If I could just figure out how to put everything together. The right form, the right mix, the right this, the right that, the right zip code. And it never comes together because it's us trying to manage our own lives. It's us trying to play God.

And it's a very self-defeating process. But that's what we do. And the more hopeless we become, the more we give up on it. And we just fall into a surrendered, suffering state that most of us will never get out of.

And that's, that's that's that power. But I don't want to admit that the only thing that's ever given me any relief in my life is, is the problem in my life. It's the only thing that's ever gave me any kind of solution. It truly is that, I mean, it is a solution because the only thing that gave me relief from the terrible life, the only thing not my mother's love, none of that did for me what this did for me.

And so that delusion alone that I'm not with all the evidence says that I am. Did I walk into a bar one day and say, you know, I'd like to have a cold beer? What's that going to cost me? It's going to cost you three dollars.

Doesn't sound like too big a price to pay. I'll pay it. But the next time you walk in and say, what's it going to cost you? Yeah, it's going to cost you your education and your career.

I don't sound like too big a price to pay. I'll pay it. And the next time you walk in, what's it going to cost you? It's going to cost you all the relationships that you really care deeply about.

It doesn't sound like too big a price to pay. I'll pay it. And the next time you walk in, what's it going to cost you? It's going to cost you your freedom.

And also, like, too big a price to pay. I'll pay it. And eventually, one day you walk in. What's it going to cost?

It's going to cost you your health, your mental health, your physical health, your spiritual health, your physical health, all of it, your emotional well-being. It's going to cost all that doesn't sound like too big a price to pay. I'll pay it. And then one day you walk in, what's it going to cost you?

It's going to cost you your life. They don't like to be a price to pay. I'll pay it. And it sounds totally insane when you lay it out like that.

But yet, if you take your own history, it fits like a glove. That's the accounting, as baffling, as powerful. And there's a lot of people will pay the ultimate price tonight. They will not wake up again.

There's millions, if not billions of people chasing the effect produced by alcohol to get rid of the care, the boredom and the worry in their life right this moment and that tonight they won't open their eyes ever again. It's just the hard core truth of it. This delusion that I'm not an alcoholic will kill most of us, thank God we've. We've at least conceded it here today.

Hopefully that our most cells. But if I ever forget it, if I ever drink again, there's no guarantee I'd ever draw a sober breath the rest of my life. That's the hardcore part. Just buried a guy.

This. Back in February February twenty eighth, I gave a guy a six, a six, a six month coin. On March twenty eighth, we buried him. He died within thirty days of relapse and acute alcoholism.

And he'd been around AA for years, been to treatment like five times in the last six years. There was no new information that gave him. But it's just hard because you sit there and you're so polished, you have all this knowledge, you have all this experience, and you cannot give it to them. I remember getting the text in the middle of the night that says, his brother said he sent the police to his house for a wellness check, and he was behind the door.

He was still alive, barely breathing. But when they by the time they got in the hospital, he died. It was pronouncement acute alcohol, poison. That's how he died.

So it's just this real. I mean, it's what it's the hard part about this whole thing. If you're in the in the mix of all that, you see it all the time. So those two delusions alone, that first one is the driver of my life still today.

It's still what you think of me can still drive my life today. And it's just it's just part of the human condition. I've given away out now, I've given this toolkit that we talk about.

Delusion 3: Victimization

Delusion of victimization is probably one of the most powerful delusions that there is. It's powerful. I mean, put it this way. Ask yourself this question.

Have you ever met a victim? In all your life, have you ever met one? And here's another truth you can't be a victim and heal. It can't be a victim and heal.

And the problem with victimization as an alcoholic is this. I can drink myself to death, and it's not my fault. I can blow my brains out. I can blow my lungs out.

I can blow my nozzles out. I can blow my brains out. And it's not my fault. I can sit in a nine by seven or ten by six jail cell for the rest of my earthly life.

And it's not my fault. And I had a blameless as long as the Mississippi River while my life was jacked up and a lot of co-signers on it, it owned. It had me like a big old giant claw with sharp fingernails. It had me by the throat against the wall when I got here.

My life sucks because of you. Because of them, because of the system, because of the rules, because of the context going down the line. If you had my life, you would fill in the blank. That was my life.

In every conflict there is, I think, in the world system, every conflict there is in the world system, whether it's whether it's an organization, whether it's a group of people, whether it's individuals at the heart of that. If you peel it back, you'll find victimization. We struggle because you make us struggle. And so that in our big book would say, to conclude that others is wrong is about as far as most of us ever got.

That's that's that's what victimization looks like. That's the farthest I ever got as you jack me up. And the hard part of that is it's there's a lot of validation to it. There's a lot of hard stories here today.

I mean, hard stories, heart wrenching stories of trauma in people's lives, sexual trauma, verbal, physical, emotional abandonment, go on down the line. True hardcore stuff, all those things. Sexual abuse, physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, experienced all that stuff before I was a teenager. My life was jacked up, friends.

And again I and it held me prisoner and I didn't even know it was the big part of it. That's why it's a delusion, because I can't even see that this has got me trapped. I can't move forward because of what you did to me. You've taken me out of the game.

I can never be back in the game because of what you did. You sucker punch me. You hit me from my blind side. You did whatever.

Now I can't play the game for the rest of my life. It's a delusion because it's not true. But it's my reality. I'm stuck in it.

So when I sat with that sponsor for the first time at three years sober, I was ate up with it. And he said, what? He said, what I shared with you last night. Tell me about your life.

I'm twenty five. I'm going on twenty six. No education, no GED, criminal record, no licence. Probably never driver against the rest of my life.

Going down the line. Lay it all out there for him. It was just my list of this stuff. Vomiting, victimisation all over his table.

And what he said to me, you know, was true. He said, everything you have in your life, everything you have right here, right now, you have because of who you become. until you own that truth. You're never going to move past it. And I and I had no ownership at that point.

I've already lived a quarter of my life and there was no ownership for my life. I was stuck in that victimization my whole life, and I didn't even see it. I remember sitting with, you know, when we when we started that inventory process for the first time. And I said, my sponsors out hand me a yellow notebook pad.

Right. Start with your resentments. Why? I grew up in the Ozark Mountains.

I, I didn't even know what a resentment was. It wasn't wasn't even everyday language for me. So my little twisted mind, I. Let's not have any resentments since I don't even know what they are, right?

That was my mind. And he had to laugh out of that too. And they said, well, let's change the word for you. I said, okay, what's what are we going to replace it with?

He goes, conflict. You ever been in conflict? I said, I've been in conflict my whole life because that's what I'm talking about. And it's true.

I'm either in a conflict coming out of a conflict. Or guess what? Getting ready to go into another one. There's always conflict my whole life.

So I started writing with that, and I wrote for about an hour and a half, and he finally said, stop, let me see what you got. And I handed him this. This is the power. This is how delusional this stuff is.

So I hand him this notebook and he looks at it and he goes, let me ask you a question, Harold. Where's your dad on this? I said, excuse me. He says.

Where's your dad? I said, I never had a relationship with my dad. I only saw my dad a couple of times when I was about this tall, and the only time I saw him at all later in life was he came to trial for the

first time. When I got sentenced, he came from Oklahoma to the hearing where they sentenced me for the first time.

So the last time I saw my dad. So I don't have any real beef with my dad, you know? That's why he's not on the list. He goes, let me press you on that a little bit.

When you were a kid, Harold, were you obvious other people in their dads when you saw kids with their fathers? Nobody ever asked me that before in my life. But he had me. I never thought about it before, but I knew he had me.

And you know, the memories of all that started to come back and and and when somebody would ask you about your dad, what would you say to him? Where's your dad? What would you say? Would you just tell him the truth?

I don't know. My mom ran him off because he's a drunk. What would she say? Well, I would make up lies.

He's in a rodeo. He's a trucker or some fashionable thing that made it. You know, he's in the armed forces. He's in.

He's in the war. Whatever. Something that sounded a lot better than. He's just not here because that that reflects it on me in my life.

So by the time I got done with this inventory, I had a great big hole in my soul, and it was in the shape of a dad. And then, you know, then I started to see this stuff for the first time. You know, it had me completely blocked as Katie was sharing this morning. It blocked me off my whole life.

But I was ate up with this stuff. This victimization owned the title to my soul, man. And it does for so many of us. So when we were talking about these delusions, you're like, you know, why are you standing here in front of me again?

Why do you keep going back to your drinking? Why do you keep going back to jail? Why do I have to keep revoking your parole and sending you back to prison? Why?

Well, there's a whole lot more than I got a problem with drinking, and most of it's at a subconscious level. I don't even see it anyway. And it's really the truth. It's that powerful.

And so, you know, our steps give us a practical way to deal with it, to unblock the channel. So what? So the sunlight of the spirit can shine in our souls. Most of us, for the first time in our life that we can start to heal.

I would define the soul as our mind, our will, and our emotion. But we finally start to heal for the first time in our life. It's a game changer and it allowed me to move forward. I could not move forward when I'm stuck in this stuff as much as I want to.

It owns the title to my soul. I literally can't move forward. I would, but I would, but you know, and just fill in the blank. And this stuff on me.

So when you're, when I'm sitting with somebody I already know, there's a bunch of this stuff. The concluded utterance is wrong as far as most of us ever got as far as I ever got, I never got past that. Did he know I could, until I started taking ownership for my life. And this is what he's telling me until.

Until you own your life, you're never going to grow past it. That fourth column, you know, setting aside their part now looking at my part and I struggle to see the truth, even even while we're sitting there talking about the broad subject, we got the spotlight of truth on my inventory. I still struggle to see it because I'm so buried with all this crap. My sponsor had a little wooden plaque that hung on his wall and said, I don't know because that was my pack.

Answer for everything. What is your What do you think your part is? And I would sit there like a deer in headlights and he would laugh and point at the sign said, you don't know. And they had another little sign over here that said, do you want to try the truth?

So this this is my interrogation and forced us, you know, and he'd laugh. Do you want to try the truth? I don't even know how the truth, I don't I. This is Jack Nicholson said I couldn't even handle the truth problem.

Yeah, but through that process, you know, as we say, uncover, discover, discard. But it held me back my entire life. This is ultimately what changed my life. So we're going to sit with that person that's really broken because I had a lot of people come up last night and said, well, I wish my son could have heard your talk.

He's in prison right now. But but the deal is, it's just more than, hey, you just need to go to AA. Hey, you just need to go to some meetings. Hey, you just need to quit drinking.

It's so much more than that, you know? And yet we miss it. And. And I missed it, And I didn't even understand it until I got with the sponsor and really dove into what this book has to say.

But that victimization, it can still drive me today. It can still drive me. And the older, you know, there's four big pillars in life that really shape the human being. The first one, we don't get any say so and that's birth.

You don't get to pick your parents. You don't get to pick how you grow up, how you're influenced, what kind of culture you're in, what kind of context. You don't get any say so in that you just are, you're, you're subject of it and you're a victim of it. And there's some hard stories in that first pillar of life sitting right here, right now.

But then the second one, if you live long enough, if you live long enough, you're going to get ill. And so are the people that you care about. Just real life stuff. And you're going to it's going to get in your channel and you're going to and you're going to get stuck.

And I promise this will come up. Victimization. Why is this happening to me? I've done all these things.

I've helped all these people. Why am I dealing with this crap in my life? It sounds petty. It sounds pathetic.

It sounds emotionally immature. We don't ever want to say it like that. But inside that's what's going down. And I could get stuck, and I don't feel like I can move forward.

If you. The third pillar. If I live long enough, I'm going to get old. I'm gonna have to deal with aging and not just for myself, but the people that I care about.

So if you had to take care of people as they go through these final stages, I was just at a woman's house in the program. I was just at her house on Tuesday before I come here. It was the only day I could get over to see her and her husband, both long term members of AA. He was in his last days of cancer.

Really figured he would live another week or two. But I want to just share this with this. This is what I'm talking about. This is this is what this stuff looks like in real life.

I just want to share it because this is I just got it this morning. I just literally got this this morning. And this is right after her husband died. I went and saw them that morning.

He died at nine forty eight that night. This is the text I got. Harold. Thank you.

It was a horrible last night. I tell you the story later. Date Tom died at nine forty eight. Hospice didn't get there until two forty five.

By the time they picked him up, it was four o'clock. It was horrible. This morning, waking up with no one to care for. A friend in the program called about seven.

She told me to drink a cup of coffee, take a shower, and she would be here. She brought food and we talked for two hours. Had no idea what we talked about, but I do know it wasn't horrible. They came to take the medical stuff away.

I said something about the Lord and the guy didn't even say anything. I had to get something from the bedroom. When I came out, the guy handed me a bookmark, had some emergency numbers on it. Scripture references.

Well, I told him, you know, Tom's testimony and he's in a good place. A friend of mine came out from Illinois. She took me out to dinner. At dinner?

She said, by the way, there's a bag in the car and I'm spending the night. We came home and she helped me get through the living room and the bedroom back into some sort of order. So the whole day wasn't horrible. That's about it for today.

I'm probably going to get more sleep tonight than I have in the last two months. Good night. God's abundant blessings to you. That's what gets in our channel.

Friends. If you live long enough, you're going to have to deal with all that. And it's not easy. Katie shared vulnerably.

You know, it's not easy to deal with that, but it's really easy to get stuck in this victimization when you're stuck in it without even asking for it because it's had its teeth in us our whole life. Be able to get free from it enough to move on in life. And that's really what has to happen. You have to move on in life.

You know, when I was challenged to go get that GED immediately, this victimization. You know, I can't because of blah blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's just that powerful.

Delusion 4: Impossibility

The delusion of impossibility is the next delusion. This delusion is why we have a recidivism rate of sixty seventy percent in the Department of Corrections. It's also why people cycle in and out of treatment centers, come in and out of the rooms of AA, and they come, you know, and nothing changes. Nothing changes because they've already given up before it started.

You know, this delusion of impossibility when you pull open the blinds and you see the mountain of your salvage, your wreckage, I call it Mount wreckage, you look out and see mount wreckage. All the hearts you broke, the bridges. You burnt the opportunities you squander. It looks like Mount Everest.

And it seems impossible that it's ever going to go away. And the older you are when you sit here, the bigger that mountain is. Because time, the value of time is not on your side. So you just get filled with this discouragement.

And it's absolutely powerful how it will hold us back. There's no parable. I think that's very fitting. It's it's the parable is the parable of the.

The devil had a yard sale one day. He had all the seven deadly sins out lust, greed, sloth, you name it, all out on the table. Big price tags. Little patron come by.

And he saw them all and he's looking at everything. But he had something on the back table behind him on a separate table. And he said, hey, what's that? And he goes, don't worry about it.

It's not for sale. Okay. But what is it? He goes, none of your business.

I'll make you a hell of a deal on all this stuff right here. And so the bargaining went back and forth. He goes, man, I know you're not going to sell it to me. I just want to know what it is.

I'm not going to leave here until you tell me what it is. He goes, I'll tell you what it is, but it's not for sale. He goes, what is it? He goes, it's discouragement.

He goes, why isn't it for sale? He goes, man, I win more souls over with that than all this other crap put together. It's not for sale. And it's that discouragement that defeats most of us.

You got somebody walking down their tenth rehab. Everything he owns in a bag. I got a felony conviction. No home plan.

Not two nickels to rub together. No place to live. They're forty years old. They're fifty years old or sixty or seventy.

And you're telling them, hey, just hang in there. The apostles are going to become possible if you just go to meetings and do this deal. It's like, okay, sounds great, you know? But inside you're already giving up.

And how do you deal with that? I mean, how do you overcome that delusion that it's going to be impossible for my life? I mean, I had a wise man, said, Harold, God will move mountains for you, but he's going to ask you to bring a shovel and not just to lean on it. And you're sitting there with a five gallon bucket and a shovel digging.

Look it up at Mount Everest going and and this is going to be gone one day. Are you out of your mind? You're just full of discouragement the whole time That it can ever change for you. I walk into these spaces every single weekend, every single week from a treatment center and to the Department of Corrections and sit with the most impossible situations, the most possible lives, with holy anticipation that if I can help you through my own experience or help take actions you don't believe in, that the impossible become possible.

I gave you one example last night, but for that one, there's the power of ten that don't. Because of this discouragement, because of this impossibility. Dude. It's impossible.

I've been trying and this is what I hear. This is typical treatment center. Somebody comes in from detox. They just got done to residential.

Hey, what's your name? My name is Tony. Tony. How's it going?

Well, I'm just. This is my M.O.. It's my fourth time. Here I go.

Get out there. I don't, I do okay for a while, but then I fall off and I'm back, and I'm back here again. And now I'm back in treatment. This is what I do.

And basically they're just saying I've already given up before I ever got started because there's no hope for me. Because this is just what I do. I get out, nothing changes. Nothing changes.

Keep doing what you're doing. You keep getting what you're getting. Well, you wish you just had magic stuff to tell them to get into, to overcome that. But it's what you have to overcome.

It's only going to come by your own experience. It's just one step to the next step, to the next step. And it's like I tell them, I said, look, you come here, you come into these spaces, guys and gals, you come here and it's like you just visualize a Ziploc bag, and this little Ziploc bag is a thousand piece puzzle and there's pieces missing, and this is your life. And you walk into this space and you hold it up and everybody sees it.

Everybody knows it. And you look, it's impossible. You're not going to say it because you don't have that language. But it's what you're saying.

This isn't impossible. This is ever going to be anything. So why even try? And you're invited from day one.

You're invited from day one. Just like if we were going to put a real puzzle together, just dump it out here on the table. If we were going to put a real thousand piece puzzle together, dump it out. Katie, come up here.

Sit next to me. Come on up. Everybody just come up. And we all get around the table and we just start putting this thing together.

And we start with an outline, you know, because that's just what you do. You get the outline together and then you start filling in the middle. And I said, but you're invited to come and do that. You're invited to sit here.

And if you do that, if you bring the sponsor says, come bring your puzzle, bring your possible life, all your crap, all the broken hearts, all the burnt bridges, all the stuff, come here and dump it out. Just dump it out. And the sponsor, not just the sponsor, but all your people will get around the table and start to put their hands in your little life. And next thing you know, you're going to have an outline for your life, and you're going to start to have hope for the first time in your life.

And eventually, if you stay, which is the critical thing here, if you stay, all this thing comes together and those pieces that are missing, this sovereign higher power that we talk about here is power greater than yourself, whom most call God. That sovereign hand will fill in those blanks. And the next thing you know, you're going to have this kind of life that you want to shellack it, you want to frame it, and you want to hang it on the wall. And the good news is not just good news.

It's the best he's ever. God's already got a place on the refrigerator for it. But the sad part is, most of you will never break the seal on the bag. You walk out of here with your bag still completely intact.

Your puzzle piece is missing. Your fingers crossed. Hoping tomorrow is better than it was today. And how do you overcome that until their life depends on it, until they their life depends on it.

They won't do it. I sit with these people. I said, there's two doors. This for the sake of argument, for the sake of illustration, I tell them, let's just pretend there's a bus going to get up here.

It's going to pull up and we're going to get on this bus and we're going to all go to this, uh, to this airfield, and we're going to get up and we're going to jump out of a plane together. Today we're all going to parachute for the first time. And when we get there, we get off the bus. They line us all up and they say, look, you got two options.

Door A, door B, door A is, man, there's just a bunch of parachutes in there, man. Just go help yourself find one you like glitter, pink, purple, blue, black, psychedelic, you name it. They're all just find one you like. Fluff it up, get it together, hang out, vape, smoke, do whatever you're going to do.

Play on your phone, check your social media feeds, whatever. But three hours be back because we're going to go up and we're going to jump. Or you can go to door B and somebody will meet you there. They will go and help you get fitted for a parachute.

You'll go through some classes, some instruction, and then somebody you're going to be appointed to is going to actually going to go with you. They're going to clip to you and they are going to jump out with you. So which door are you going to pick? We're looking at like, it's a dumb question.

It's like we're going to pick B. Why? So this is the critical piece. Why are you going to pick me?

And of course, somebody will eventually say it because I don't want to die because they know it's a matter of life or death. So everybody's going to pick me. Now you're sitting here in the d o c, or you're sitting here in this treatment center, and that gate, when you walk out of it, whether it's got razor wire,

high voltage, or it's just a gate, is the landing field is, is the, is the plank for that same plane door? A get the sponsor come all the way.

You know, you can get a sponsor if you want to. You can take this information, waggle it Daniel it, put it in your put it together however you want. Just going out the door and figure it out on your own. Or B you can go and get a sponsor and you'll have a good home plan and you'll have some strong groups.

We'll get you into steps. And this whole thing that's going to transform your life is right there in door B. How many are you going to choose? Door A?

How many are you going to choose door B? Same question. And people will sit there and not even know how to answer the question. Some will say, well, I'm going to choose door B, but I said, many of you are going to choose door A, but you can just see that the comparison of those two analogies.

It's a matter of life and death. I just don't see it for what it is. That's the delusion. Until I get to that, if I can't overcome that delusion, I'm out of ideas and there's nothing else I can do.

While I rarely ever choose door B, so when you're standing in front of the judge, you're standing in front of your family members, standing in front of your HR or whoever in your life, and they're saying, why are you standing here? And your best answer is, I don't know. It's true. But this delusion is powerful, man.

So when you're working with that person or you got that child that you care so much about, and they just won't get sober. They won't stay sober. They keep burning their life further and further to the ground. You give them all the information.

You point them to all the right people. Why don't they just do this thing? Well, it's all these things I'm talking about are. Why?

It's not just one little simple answer to the illusion of spiritual disqualification. It's number five and everybody suffers from it. Whether you consider yourself a person, a reason, or a person of faith, we come here, we have questions, we have doubts. And no matter what you claim, whether you say there is no God, or if you say there is a God, I'll give you the podium.

Prove it. So you can't prove it. At the end of the day, you can have a good story. You can make strong arguments on both sides, strong arguments, and I'll argue right there with you.

But at the end of the day, you can't prove either position. You can't prove it. So it's going to come down to faith. But we come here, and this is what I love about Alcoholics Anonymous, and it's why I think the traditions, um, or I know for a fact that the traditions are impacting our life long before the twelve steps ever did.

And one of the most powerful tools that comes in to this, this, this room is, would be the, would be the gift of equality. It's probably the greatest gift you can give anybody. And it happens right when you walk in Alcoholics Anonymous. You know, we don't care who you are.

We don't care where you came from. We don't care who you voted for. We don't care what your politics are. We don't care what your gender is.

We don't care what your sexuality is. We don't care about your past. We're just glad you're here. And it's authentic and it's powerful.

But Katie referred to you're my People. That's exactly what she's talking about. It's one of the most healing things. It's the most Kingdom of God thing that I know of on the planet.

And I'm around a lot of different stuff. Trust me, out in the world. But it's that gift of the quality that's so powerful and that gets the quality allows us to come in here with all of our doubts, all of our questions,

all of our concerns, all of our whatever, and stay as long as we need to, to work through it. But we all come and most of us don't even know we have.

Delusion 5: Spiritual Disqualification

We we only know we have permission to move from whatever we come indoctrinated with here, whether it's atheism, whether it's certainty about there's only one way to know God or whatever it might be. We're indoctrinated with whatever we come here with. We don't know that we have permission to move. And you can look at Bill Wilson's story and see it clear as day, because when that becomes the meat bill, here's this little drinking buddy, sixty days sober, shining, gleaming flax and wax, as the song would say from hair.

And, uh, this is a guy he partied with his whole life. And he could tell by looking at his skin. He's not the same guy. His eyes are different.

Everything's different about him. He thought he was going to come. We're going to get another one on. He said, dude, what's up with you?

He says, I got religion. and what's Bill saying? I was aghast. Look that word up. And then he goes on, you know, he's got.

We all come with this box of certainty. God is. God isn't. God can't be trusted.

God. It's all hip hop. Whatever. We got our little box of certainty.

When we show up, we have it. And you can almost visualize Bill pulling out his little box of certainty, sitting down in front of me and opening it, and he starts to tell you everything that's in it. And the first thing he says, well, I went to the Winchester Cathedral with my grandfather when I was young. I know about this Jesus guy.

Not too closely followed by those who claim. I mean, he's telling you everything that's in his box, but he has no idea. He has permission to move from that to him. He's stuck in this little box.

That's the disqualification that I can't, uh. I struggle with all with everything in this box I struggle with whether I believe or I don't believe, I struggle with it, but I don't know that I got permission to move. And finally, every sixty day. Abby gives him permission.

Bill. Calluses. You know the language. Why don't you just choose your own conception of a god?

And for the first time, he's given permission to move and to change his life. Then he would go on to write the third step. And if you read the best of Bill, the very first paragraph in the best of Bill, and I'm paraphrasing, but there's five subjects in the best bill. It's just different compilations of different writings on subjects.

And these are the five subjects. But the very first subject in that book is Faith. And the very first paragraph, Bill says this. He says, we turn our will and lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

Those words are probably the most important words in the entire vocabulary. Why? Because we give you freedom to move. We give you permission to move something you didn't even know you could do, and do so with equality.

So come with your doubts. Come with your questions. Come with all your junk. Come and sit here.

Work through it as long as you need to work through it. What's space like that exist on a planet? We're sitting on it. We come here with a treasure map trying to find a treasure, and we're sitting on the X.

We're sitting on the X of this thing. And it's just important to know that. And so that's what I this delusion. What if I, if I'm, if I'm, if I'm a person, if I'm a secular person, I'm a person of reason.

As soon as I see the steps and God and higher power, I'm out. This is going to work for me. I mean, you're disqualified right off the bat. But when you come, even if you're a person of faith, you grew up in a faith tradition or whatever you come or some conception of God.

Not totally out there, but not agnostic. I think that's why we got a chapter we agnostic, because most of us would identify with that, if we're honest, but we show up with our stuff and we're just allowed to sit here for as long as we need to with it. And you hear people share what they saw, what they experience and what's page twenty nine tells us in our personal stories in the back of the book right here. Forty two personal stories.

And each person in their own way, is going to tell you how they developed a relationship with God. And we hope that none of these accounts in bad taste. We hope that if you hear all these different collaborations of stories, that you're going to be moved and say, yeah, man, I'm like, you people and I want I want to go where you people are going. But this delusion of spiritual disqualification can really keep a lot of us stuck.

Even into sobriety. I get this all the time. Hey, I started going back to church and now I'm really starting to get some stuff out of church. And I know, how do you balance the two?

I get this question all the time. How do you balance the two? Because I feel like I might be getting more over here than I'm getting over here, or my family really loves this, and I'm really starting to do this more. So what about all that?

How do I how do I navigate that? And these are fair questions. So our book says that most people that come from a faith tradition over time will go back and become stronger and better members than they ever had before. Why?

Well, because you've been unblocked. You've had a spiritual transformation, right? That the sunlight of the spirit on your soul. Now you can go at life with honesty, open mind, and willingness.

You know, you never had that before. Now you have that gift. So now I can walk into a place of faith with that kind of demeanor changes everything. Every, every experience you're going to have there from the Bible or whatever it is, you're going to read the Koran or whatever.

It's going to change because of that principle way of life. You're approaching life now through a whole new set of lenses. And it changes the world. But it's like, but I always bring it back to and this is where I come to, you know, I go in a lot of different circles, but these are my people.

This is bloom where you're planted, right? This is where I was planted, and this is where I never want to lose sight of. You know, page fourteen. I'll get to it in a minute.

But but ultimately we're connected here by by dying to self, by living what I talked about last night. Living a life of humility, self sacrifice, other centeredness and learning to what to see. What does it see and share? Love to love everybody, including our enemies, including the people who just don't care for everybody.

We're going to move from a taker to a giver. That shift has happened or you won't stay here. Usually that has to happen. Or you will.

You will get tired of this stuff. I don't want to hear how it works no more. I want to hear about anything anymore. I don't want to hear what Joe says.

I can tell you what he's going to say before he says it. You know what I mean? And then through a series of compromises, you're not here anymore. You're drunk, you know.

But the shift has to happen when it happens. This is where you experience this thing we call God, this higher power. When I'm busy thinking about this corn dog, I'm not thinking about this one. And there's magic in that space, right?

This is probably the most spiritual I'm going to be all day when I'm busy, invested in you and not invested in me. But these are all real things. But man, I'm just telling you, spiritual disqualification can just, even after years of sobriety, just take you right out to the very door. The fundamental thing that we're given here is to get to be quality.

When I go into a treatment center, I ask them these two questions what are you afraid of? Here's our number one answer. The price is right. Ding ding ding ding.

Number one answer. Relapse. Always going to be number one. Always going to be number one.

Number two. It'll never call it love. They'll never call it love. But they'll say, how are we going to create this connection we got here between us, however many people in treatment, how are we going to create this when we leave?

Because for most people, it's the first time they've ever experienced it in their life. They would never call it God. They would never call it spirituality. They definitely won't call it love.

They will call it connection. You know, these are my people. I'm talking to people I don't, you know, they're telling you. Page seventeen.

I'm hanging out with people. I would never hang out with old people hanging out with younger people and, you know, white collar people hanging out with these people and straight people, hanging out with gay people and just going on down the line. I never saw myself doing this, but here I am in this little twenty days, thirty days that I'm here. My life is shifting.

And some of them for the first time in their life, and they're scared to death because it's the only thing that my illness has no defense against is that. Illness has no defense against it, and the equality that we experience here, that's the gift of equality. And it's one of the most powerful gifts I can give any human being. It's just to love you for who you are and I.

And believe me, when I got here, all of us are on the spectrum when it comes to isms and phobias. You don't think so? Write it out and bring it to Katie later tonight. She'll work through it with you.

But we all are. Even still today, at different levels, we're on somewhere on the spectrum of that stuff. Didn't ask for it. Culture gives it to me.

But can I own it? If I can own it, I gotta name it before you can claim it. But if you can name it, you can claim it, you can own it, you can change. You can grow from it.

It'll change your life.

Delusion 6: No Real Purpose for My Life

Last but not close for this one is the delusion. There's no real purpose for my life. Great. Here we come here and we get sober and we do some stuff and we get.

You know, it's like playing a country album back. You get all your stuff back, all the people come back in your life. But at the end of the day, you know, you know, and this is somebody who's really coming from a hopeless state. It's like, great, I get out of here and I get a job.

I'm a felon, so I'm going to work in a dead end job. I'm probably never going to have a license. I'm going to be taking commercial transportation. I'm probably going to live in some kind of either finished apartment or some kind of sober living environment, or co-op or kosher or something.

You do all this stuff to just survive and that's it. I mean, that's really, at the end of the day, that's all I'm gonna do is I'm just going to stay sober to exist. And you don't see the purpose in your life. And, uh, a great book, an old great book called Man's Search for meaning, you can search that book out yourself.

But one of the key principles of that book is that if somebody is suffering and there's no meaning to their life, they just give up. You have to have something you're living for that's bigger than you. You've got to have something you're getting up for or getting excited about. And our book gives us that.

And it, but it gives it to us not just in some cushy, warm fashion. It gives it to us with a double edged sword going, a double edged thing. A bittersweet thing, I guess, is the better way to say it. You live this way.

Storybook life. You don't live this way. You will die pretty much cut and dry. This is what it says.

This is the same guy who gave him permission to move. Says this to him. My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs, and particularly, was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me. Faith without works is dead.

That's, you know, good old book of James saying mentioned three times in our big book that saying He said. And how appalling. True for the alcoholic. And listen, I mean this is huge for alcoholic.

Failed to perfect in a largest spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others. He could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. And we just shared some of those this morning. If he did not work, he would surely drink again.

And if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. And with us, it's just like that. Some of you were in the red ball meeting.

Yes. I think last night in page one fifty two was thrown up. Do you have a sufficient substitute for alcohol? You know, that was the statement, I think.

And the answer is yes, I love it. And it's vastly more than that. It's a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. And if you pay attention to it, it's written in the verb form, not the noun.

You know, you have to participate in your own recovery. But if you do that, your imagination is going to be fired, right? The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead of you. You're going to make lifelong friends.

Evidence right here at Altoona. Evidence right here. But most importantly, this is the kicker that you're going to have the privilege, and I'm paraphrasing, to walk shoulder to shoulder with other people and help them rediscover life. And if you do that long enough, you're going to finally know what it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

That's that shift from a taker to a giver. And if that shift happens, you'll have more purpose in your life than you'll ever have. Just a couple of weeks ago, I'll close with this story. Twenty six years ago, I'm driving from my mom's house.

My mom was still alive, and I had time to kill before my home group, and where I went to my first little AA meeting in Saint Louis. I hadn't been there in several years. I said, you know, I'm going to buy the Hampton facilities. August fourth, two thousand.

I said, I'm going to go by there and see some people. So I'm driving. It's a hot summer day, and I drive and I see this guy walking down the street. He's walking and he's got a kiss shirt on.

Right away he got my attention. He's got shorts and boots and socks and he's got a massive hair. He's got a beard, he's got straw all in it and straw in his beard and his back. And he looks like Tom Hanks from castaway.

You know, you remember that he's walking like this. You can tell he's having a bad day, you know? And he's like six blocks from the street from the club. I said, man, I hope that dude shows up at Hampton.

I pull into Hampton, silly. I go in and get a cup of coffee, sit down and start wind jamming with the guys. About fifteen, twenty minutes later, this guy walks in and he goes, is there a meeting here? I said, yes, sir, it's right there in that room.

It's at five thirty. I wasn't going to it. I was going to my home group of seven. But he goes in there now, I don't know where you're at with the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God punched me right in the chest.

Says, put down your coffee or grab your coffee and go in that meeting. I'm like, oh, man. Okay. So I go in there.

I sit right across from him at the table, this School group, and the chairperson is a newer person. They asked, is there any newcomer? He raised his hand. Hey, welcome.

That was it. Nobody was talking to him and just kind of move on with the rest of the meeting. And I said, I said you. I said, are you serious about staying somewhere?

Oh man, I'm going to die if I don't. Said, well, let's go out here. So we went out in the living room and we had the talk. And the talk was just simple, you know, are you willing to go any lengths to change your life?

He said, man, I'll do anything. I'm out. I'm out of ideas. I'm out of ideas in my life depends on it.

The magic words you want to hear from your recipient. I said, well, let's get in the car and I'll take you to my home group. And I took him my home group. Of course, my home group loved on him.

I said, where do you got to go? He goes, I don't have anywhere to go. I've been living in. I've been living in parks, you know, on a straight whiskey diet.

I said, when's the last place you lived? He goes, I live with my buddy Mike. My my cousin Mike and I worked for him too, but I haven't been there in a long time, and he ain't going to want nothing to do with me. I said, well, let me let me call Mike.

He goes, yeah, I don't think that's a good idea. I said, let me just call it. Obviously, you don't have any good ideas, so let me. He goes, well, Touche.

So I called Mike and I said, Mike. And I told him what was going on. I said, I want to, I got your cousin here. And I said, I want you to meet me halfway on this.

He said the magic words to me. I think he's right. I do this with hundreds of guys. He goes, I don't know you, but I'll trust you.

Bring him by. So I took him by his cousin's house. I said, I want you to go in there and I want you to get cleaned up. I want you to take a shower because you stink.

I want you to shave. I want you to eat. I want you to talk to your your cousin, and I'll pick your butt up tomorrow. And I will every day for as long as I need to.

And he came out the next day and he looked like he's a very handsome man. And he's clean, blue eyed, cleaned up in the car. And he and the Toy Story two was out, so he sounded like Tim Allen. He sounded like Buzz Lightyear. so I nicknamed him buzz.

I said, I want to call you buzz. Well, that was twenty six years ago. I just gave him this coin. You know, on the other night at the home group for twenty six years of sobriety.

So if you're sitting here with that delusion that there's no real purpose for your life, it's not by you. It's through you. It's God in you and through you. You're not God for you and you know, for your benefit, but God in you and through you, there's work to be done.

And on that page, back to one fifty two. This is what most people miss, and I hope you don't miss it. Going back to page one fifty two, where am I to find these people? Well, people always quote rich and poor, high and low, but they always forget this.

The people are dying all out there. Your brothers and sisters out there dying from alcoholism, from these delusions, from this second surrender, from all this stuff that we talked about. They're out there dying hopelessly in ocean. You've been getting out of the pit.

Somebody came to the pit. They threw a rope. You were in a pit, alcohol. And somebody threw you the rope to get you out.

And you were fortunate enough, humble enough to feed it enough, surrendered enough. You grabbed the rope and they pulled you out. Not only did they pull you out, but they walked with you shoulder to shoulder. They dumped your puzzle out with you.

They helped you recreate your life. They help you restore your life. They help you live a storybook life. So what's your responsibility?

Here's the rope. Go back to the holes because people are dying in those holes. So if you're sitting here today and you're not invested in that, you're not going back to the holes. I'm really going to press you on that.

If you're sitting here going, I used to do that ten years ago, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, I would challenge that you're living off memories instead of imagination because you're missing the stuff and you can start to be here a long time and really feeling empty, isolated, plain vanilla. I don't even know if I should do this anymore. And the whole magic of this thing of being a taker to a giver, you just start to compromise that. And that self-centeredness, which has always been the root of our problem, will come back into your life.

And guess what? The delusion of inequality will jump in on you. What's been there the whole time? You'll start comparing yourself to the people of the past, present and future and thinking, I don't know if I fit here anymore.

And the next thing you know, you're gone, or you're drunk. And somebody, anybody seen Tony, you know, and been around for a while. It's forty years sober. We always boast about the newcomers.

Sometimes we need to take care of our old timers, you know, because they're human beings and all those pillars will come at them. They need people to be invested. The big illusions are real. If we can overcome them, it leads to incredible life.

But it's really difficult when you're working with others. But it's really important, I think, to know what you're up against. And it's way more than you just got to drink a problem. That's all I got.

Thanks.