



Episode 3 Transcript

So my name is Mike Z. And, welcome back to Agnostic AA and our little agnostic big book study of Alcoholics Anonymous. We're starting with the foreword to the second edition today.

This is a bit longer, so buckle up.

forward to the second edition. Figures given in this foreword describe the fellowship as it was in 1955.

Since the original forward to this book was written in 1939, a wholesale miracle has taken place. Our earliest printing voice, the hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination.

Our earliest printing voice the hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination already.

16 years have elapsed between our first printing of this book and the presentation in 1955 of our second edition, and that brief space alcoholics Anonymous has mushroomed into nearly 6000 groups whose membership is far above 150,000 recovered alcoholics groups are to be found in each of the United States, and all the providences of Canada.

AA has flourishing communities in the British Isles, the Scandinavian countries, South Africa, South America, Mexico, Alaska, Australia and Hawaii. All told, promising beginnings have been made in some 50 foreign countries and US possessions. Some are just now taking shape in Asia. Many of our friends encouraged us by saying that this is, but the beginning, only the augury of a much larger future ahead.

So in those first couple of paragraphs, up in the first bit, I've got 1955 circled. I've got fellowship. Every alcoholic who journeys will find the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination. That is true. And most of America, you can go anywhere. Pretty much any city, any town. And there's probably an AA meeting within 25 miles. You can find it all on the the a big, the AA meeting app.

Alcohol agnostic alcoholics. That's a little bit harder, but we do have plenty of zoom meetings. That you can attend. Then I have underlined 6000 groups. Membership is far above 150,000, so it grew from 100 to 6000 groups and 150,000 members. So must be something working here. People don't voluntarily, participate in a thing that doesn't benefit them somehow.

I had no idea what augury meant for me. I thought it meant some type of drill and auger. But actually, it's kind of archaic. It just means foretelling. That was at the end of the second paragraph. That's all I have on that page. Next. Actually, I got to read the beginning of the paragraph.

The spark that was to flare into the first AA group was struck in Akron, Ohio,

In June 1935, during a talk between a New York stockbroker and an Akron physician. Six months earlier, the broker had been relieved of his drink obsession by a sudden spiritual experience following a meeting with an alcoholic friend who had been in contact with the Oxford Group of that day.

He had also been greatly helped by the late Doctor William de silk, a New York specialist and alcoholism, who is now accounted no less than a medical saint by AA members, and whose story of the early days of our sobriety appears in



the next pages from this doctor. The broker had learned the grave nature of alcoholism, though he could not accept all the tenants of the Oxford groups.

He was convinced of the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of a belief in a dependance upon God. That's basically the, you know, the 12 steps condensed right there. You know, and for me, I just take out the the God part, right. I depend upon the principles.

I depend upon my sober community. But, you know, Sky daddy, not so much. Anyway,

Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself.

The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself, he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician. The physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma, but he had failed.

But when the broker gave him Doctor Silk worst description of alcoholism, its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again. Up to the moment of his death in 1950, this seemed to prove that one alcoholic could affect another, as no nonalcoholic could.

It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery. Okay, so that's got a bunch of stuff I had in the first paragraph, underlined grave nature of alcoholism. I had two sentences down. Need for moral inventory, confession, and the belief in dependance on God. We already talked about that. I had underlined only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic.

To save himself, he must carry the message to another alcoholic. And I had one alcoholic could affect another, as no nonalcoholic could, strenuous work in the next. We're over on the next page. One alcoholic with another was vital to permanent recovery. I want to talk about that a little bit. So, you know, let's just take the God thing aside.

Right. And let's just look at kind of the facts. So, Bob, they're talking this is Bill W and doctor Bob. Right. And it says, oh, he got this spiritual idea from reading the doctor's opinion. Oh, okay. So we'll get to that. But it's interesting that, you know, doctor Bob pursued spiritual ideas before, but it failed that he made Bill, who has concrete, practical, tangible things to do, specifically the fourth in the fifth step, the moral inventory and discussion with another.

You can call it moral inventory, or you can call it the grudge list, the problem list, etc.. And then sharing that with another human being who understands what you're trying to do and why, that's interesting. And that to me is where the a lot of the magic lay right? God nonsense aside, I've done this and I continue to do it, and I find value in it in the context of the way the four steps written in some other processes, smart recover.

I think, calls it CBT, dharma recovery or recovery, Dharma calls it, you know, inquiry, etc. but there's looking at oneself honestly notating it, exploring it, discussing it, letting it go and learning some new behaviors in this world. Right. That's helped me a lot. So I think that's where the magic of AA is, the spirituality aspect. Whatever. Right.

I don't care. I care what works for me and for the other agnostics. Hopefully my sharing can help you, right? Don't think we need to adhere to any kind of God or higher power whatsoever. It's the act of the work itself that's important for me

Hence the two men sent to work almost frantically upon alcoholics arriving the ward of the Akron City Hospital. Their very first case, a desperate one, recovered immediately and became a number three. He never had another drink.



This work at Akron continued through the summer of 1935. There were many failures, but there was an occasional heartening success. When the broker returned to New York in the fall of 1935, the first AA group had actually been formed, though no one realized it at the time.

I think that's interesting that they, you know, tried to carry this message and it flopped. It failed. It didn't work. Except for the occasional few. It's kind of goes to my opinion that, you know, AA works for certain types. And I also know early AA was heavily founded and operating basically from the Oxford Group, six principles, which later became the 12 steps.

You know, and Bill was, you know, pretty fucking preachy. So, you know, we know that doesn't work if you're an agnostic. You know, as soon as somebody says you must, I'm like, you must go fuck yourself, right? It's just the nature of, of idiots like me. Anyway, moving on. A small group probably took shape in New York, to be followed in 1937 with the start of a third at Cleveland.

Besides these, there were scattered alcoholics who had picked up the basic idea in Akron or New York who were trying to form groups in other cities. And.

1937, the number of members having substantial sobriety time behind them was sufficient to convince the membership that a new light had entered the dark world of the alcoholic. I have that underline. There's, there's there's hope, right. There's something here, especially back then, that can help people get sober. Right? Learn how to live sober in a drunk world.

And it's kind of a big deal that, you know, if you're an alcoholic like me, just staying sober in this world that advocates and pushes, you know, escape is, at every turn. That's a kind of a big deal for an alcoholic to stay sober in this world. So, you know, good for you for watching this and trying to make some change in your life.

It was now time the struggling groups thought to place their message and unique experience before the world. This determination bore fruit in the spring of 1939. By the publication of this volume, the membership had then reached about 100 men and women. The fledgling society, which had been nameless, now began to be called Alcoholics Anonymous from the title of its own book.

The flying blind period ended in AA entered a new phase of its pioneering time with the appearance of the new book, and a great deal began to happen. Doctor Harry Emerson Fosdick, the noted clergyman, reviewed it with approval. In the fall of 1939, Fulton Hausler, then editor of Liberty, printed a piece in his magazine called Alcoholics and God.

This brought a rush of 800 frantic inquiries into little New York office, which meanwhile had been established. Each inquiry was painstakingly answered. Pamphlets and books were sent out. Businessmen traveling out of existing groups referred to those prospective newcomers. New groups started up, and it was found, to the astonishment of everyone, that

A message could be transmitted in the mail as well as by word of mouth.

By the end of 1939, it was estimated that 800 alcoholics were on their way to recovery. So I just, have this underline. A message could be transmitted in the mail as well as by word of mouth.

I also just want to point out that, you know, they wrote the book to carry the message.

I bring this up because some people get very persnickety about how zoom doesn't count. Well, honestly, zoom gives you a lot closer experience to an in-person meeting than the book did by itself. Can you imagine reading this by yourself, like sitting in Antarctica or something, trying not to drink vodka every night? And it works. Wow. Interesting. All right.



Anyway, moving on. In the spring of 1940, John de Rockefeller gave a dinner for many of his friends to which he invited AA members to tell their stories. News of this got on the world wires. Inquiries poured in again, and many people went to the bookstores to get the book Alcoholics Anonymous. By March 1941, the membership shot up to 2000.

Then Jack Alexander wrote a feature article in the Saturday Evening Post and plays such a compelling picture of AA before the general public that alcoholics in need of help really deluged us. By the close of 1941, AA numbered 8000 members. The mushrooming process was in full swing. AA had become a national institution. I just find this interesting with all the talk of, you know, anonymity and so forth and so on, you know, what was it an did to just accidentally go to our meeting with Rockefeller?

Actually, he went because he's trying to get money. Rockefeller turned him down, but, you know, oh, then it accidentally got on the wires and got spread out. I think that's called promotion, folks. It's called PR. That aside. AA has value, and it's one of the only organizations that does, ardently practice quite a lot of what it preaches.

So and again, as always, I've been sober for four plus years. So credit where credit's due.

our society then entered a fearsome and exciting adolescent period. The test that it faced was this. Could these large numbers of erstwhile radical alcoholics successfully meet and work together? Would there be quarrels over membership, leadership and money?

Would there be strivings for power and prestige? Would there be schisms that would split AA apart? Soon? AA was beset by these very problems on every side and in every group. But out of this frightening and at first disturbing experience, the conviction grew that a is had to hang together or die separately. We had to unify our fellowship or pass off the scene.

And that's why on our chips it says unity, right, is one of the legs of the triangle. As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live. So we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.

It was thought that no alcoholic man or woman could be excluded from our society. That's a pretty bold statement that our leaders might serve but never govern. That each group was to be autonomous and there was to be no professional class of therapy. There were to be no fees or dues. Our expenses were to be met by our own voluntary contributions.

There was to be the least possible organization, even in our service centers. Our public relations were to be based upon attraction rather than promotion. It was decided that all members ought to be anonymous at the level of press, radio, TV and films, and in no circumstances should we give endorsements, make alliances, or enter public controversies. I had underlined no alcoholic man or woman could be excluded from our society.

We could update that today to be just tho person, right? Because there's a lot of idiots, who are arguing about, who can participate in AA or not and, ardently pushing their old school idea of gender and sexism and blah, blah, blah, but great, great idea to push forward. I think it should just be updated to people, and all the rest of, of these ideas, the anonymity of press, radio, TV and films, yada yada, is all good.

You know, I don't put my last name out here on this because, hey, what if I go drink, right? And people can come back and say, oh, Mike Z. Well, which Mike Z you know, it's unfortunate that, some celebrities who do get into the 12 steps in AA in particular, do make it so known.



Right? Like we just had the Brad Pitt issue guy was sober for, I don't know, seven, eight, ten years or something like that. And then his, you know, announced that he's going back to drinking, which, you know, at least he came out and said it. Right. At least he said it. And like, yep, I'm done. I'm going back to drinking.

Okay. All right. At least he was honest about it I appreciate that. And also, it's his fucking life. It's not mine. Go have a fucking drink. Right. If that's what you want to do, go do it. I'm just sharing my opinion about my sobriety anyway, this was the substance of these 12 traditions, which were stated in full on page 562 of this book, though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first international conference held at Cleveland today.

The remarkable unity of AA is one of the greatest assets that our society has. Yes, AA in general within the traditional community is still pretty strong, pretty active, you know, continues to expand, blah, blah, blah. But there is that quality of traditional and, you know, I guess in part I am I divergent, am I deviant, or am I just trying to help carve out space within the organization for, agnostics to have our place in our voice?

I like to think it's the latter, but, hey, we'll see what happens. While the internal difficulties of our adolescent period were being ironed out, public acceptance of AA grew by leaps and bounds.

for this. There were two principal reasons.

I also had underlined, the last bit there. Unity of AA is one of the greatest assets that our society has. And I do subscribe to that. The fact that, it exists, the fact that there is this organization, there is places that I can go and feel welcome. I'm mostly agnostic now. I don't really go to traditional meetings, but even so, there's agnostic meetings.

I can go to a place to feel welcome. And I appreciate that. And also, I do appreciate the traditional meetings that they do exist there, just not so much for me anymore. I'm working through some trigger trauma stuff and my, vitriolic tongue. I tend to be abrasive and aggressive toward traditionalist, and I have been expelled from meetings for it.

So, so just know that you can be expelled from AA groups. Maybe not the organization overall, but you can sure as fuck be thrown out of an AA meeting for expressing contradictory, contrary opinion to whatever the group collective is. That's why I like the agnostic groups, because they're not offended by me and they're not offended by my, disposition and dislike of any reference to a higher power.

And that in itself is kind of a beautiful thing. And like AA itself on the app does list agnostic meetings. So it is kind of fulfilling their promise. And again, remember this was all written when there was 8000 people, mostly white men, middle class, middle management people. Right. AA is growing and continue to evolve, and I hope that it continues to do so.

And doesn't fall under its own adherence to its own delusions. And because they're dogmatic. Right. The founders of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of rights did not believe all people were created equal. They meant all white men with power and money were created equal because they didn't want to pay tithes and taxes to the King. AA founders not so dissimilar, right.

And there's people who want to retreat to that right. I want to see a evolve, beyond that and where that kind of, regressive fantasy and delusion of going backwards is just smiled at and nodded at and not followed. Anyway, that's my \$0.02. I move on here

while the internal difficulties of our adolescent period were being ironed out, public acceptance of AA grew by leaps and bounds.



For this, there were two principal reasons. The large number of recoveries and reunited harms have that underlined. These made their impressions everywhere of alcoholics who came to AA and really tried 50%, got sober at once and remain that way

25% sobered up after some relapses, and among the remainder, those who stayed on with AA showed improvement.

Other thousands came to a few AA meetings and at first decided they didn't want the program. But great numbers of these, about two out of three began to return as time passed. Now that's all kind of made up. They don't really know because it doesn't have, you know, membership ledgers. You know, how do they know? Right. They're speculating based on what they know with what groups will get reported back.

But it's all very fuzzy. Fuzzy math. Right. But we do know there's a lot more groups than when they started in 1939. Anyway, another reason for the wide acceptance of AA was the administration of friends, friends in medicine, religion, and the press. Together with innumerable others

who became our able and persistent advocates. Without such support, AA could have made only the slowest progress.

Some of the recommendations of AA's early medical and religious friends will be found further on in this book. Alcoholics anonymous is not a religious organization. Neither does AA take any particular medical point of view, though we cooperate widely with men of medicine as well as with the men of religion. Alcohol being no respecter of persons, we are an accurate cross-section of America, and in distant lands the same democratic evening our process is now going on by personal religious affiliations.

We include Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus and a sprinkling of Muslims and Buddhist.

more than 15% of us are women. At present, our membership is pure meeting at a rate of about 20% per year so far, upon the total problem of several million actual and potential alcoholics in the world, we have made only a scratch. In all probability, we shall never be able to touch more than a fair fraction of the alcohol problem in all its ramifications upon therapy.

For the alcoholic himself, we surely have no monopoly. Yet it is our great hope that all those who have, as yet found no answer, may begin to find one in the pages of this book, and will presently join us on the high road to a new freedom. So there there's some of the extravagant language, and you know, hyperbole of the book will presently join us on the high road to new freedom.

And it is. I am grateful to be free from needing a drink every day. Is, aa perfect organization or is the fellowship of awesome and amazing and wonderful always 24/7? No,

it's not. Is every person who enters the rooms of AA and participates, even some nastiest motherfucking old timers? Great. No, they're not, but that doesn't matter.

At the end of the day, I'm responsible for how I show up in this world, how I react or respond in the 12 steps and sobriety have helped me to realize that so other people can do whatever that they want.

I'm responsible for me, and that's a gift. Now, back in the

previous page, things I had underlined, large numbers of recoveries and reunited homes. I think I underlined that at the time because I was separated and maybe hoping to get back together. The reunited homes didn't happen for me. But it still does happen for other people.

Doesn't matter. My journeys, my journey. I had the whole 50, 25% sobered up, blah, blah. And by the way, Bill W did not get sober at first hearing about the spiritual process, right? We'll see that in the book will illustrate that when we



get there. But Bill W, when he first heard about, you know, this process from the Oxford Group didn't work, wasn't immediately struck sober.

Same thing with doctor Bob. First time you heard it from Bill, he didn't get sober immediately. He had a good, solid relapse. So, I just like to bring that up for anybody that's, trying it again. Or feeling bad because they relapsed. Don't the two founders are not one. Chip wonders if they weren't. Why do you think you have to be glad you did come back?

Glad you're trying this. Glad you didn't die. Hopefully you didn't kill anybody. But welcome back. Also, I'm not a one chip wonder, so just saying, I had underlying Alcoholics Anonymous is not a religious organization, blah blah blah. Basically that whole paragraph, it's not

a religious organization,

but, you know, it has been classified as a

a religious organization,

In some of the courts, right? Some people who have gotten caught cards and forced to go to AA, have have sued, not AA, but the court saying, hey, you can't force me to go there because they're so overtly or covertly Christian. I'm not a Christian. You can't make me do that. That's a violation of my civil rights.

Also, you know, when I first read this book, it's like, oh, yeah, this is just cloaked Christianity, right? The father of light, blah, blah, blah, as we'll see. But even so, I have found value in the process. And I am sober, so,

I just want.

To say that there is heavy Christian themes here, but it's the process. I really think that the the value is in, finding some community of like minded people. The self-reflection, the making amends, the self-reflection and discussion, quote, confession with other people, who are of the same mindset or at least understand the process, trying to make amends where possible without causing injury.

Trying to act the opposite of my default character defects, if you will, or my, lesser, more base animal instincts like, you know, fight or flight. Well, maybe I don't always have to run. Maybe I don't always have to fight. That's some stuff I've learned here and been able to practice and seen modeled, which I didn't really get in previous parts of my life because I was lost in the booze.

Right. There's the early childhood stuff, but the early childhood stuff. It's not that it doesn't count. It's just I can't keep justifying my crappy behavior as a, 50 something year old man because of something daddy said when I was five.

I can't keep hiding from that in the bottle. I have to take accountability for myself and my actions in this world, and how I want to show up, who I want to be. So, normies might, you know, grasp that without having to destroy themselves. But whatever. I'm that type of maniac that, you know, I got to destroy myself with drugs and alcohol.

And before I become willing to try something different.

Anyway, I had underlined the, Catholic Protestants, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhist thing. I like to quote that whenever anybody says

you got to find Jesus to get sober, and

the fuck I do, it's right here in our own literature. Go fuck yourself. I also have this underlying upon therapy for the alcoholic himself.



We surely have no monopoly. AA there's a lot of old timers and even some newcomers, you know, they get all possessed and like AA is the way, the only way, the light and the word of God. Fuck you. Right? AA has a process. It works for me in some capacity. I'm happy to have it. And I'm happy to share what I know about it.

But is it the only way? I know other people get sober, stay sober, have happily contented lives, and have never even heard of AA? Just saying.

All right. That's it for the foreword to the second edition. Be sure to like and subscribe. See you next time.