

So, I'm here to talk about steps six and seven in the first half. Now, I've heard a lot of things when I was new. In my first year, listening to people's ideas of what steps six and seven are about. One of the strangest things I've heard is someone say, "Steps six and seven are the forgotten steps." Or the other thing you hear a lot is, "There is not much in steps six and seven and it's only two paragraphs and half of it is just a prayer." And so it's easy to just kind of brush over it. And the other thing is, one of the places I've come up against a lot of resistance is because I don't make a list of character defects, because a lot of people insist that were supposed to be making a list of character defects. And we're going to talk a little bit about why I find that it's not only hard to see what's supposed to be on that list but also the book never says we made a list of character defects.

So, I'd like to start step six from the bottom of page 75, where it talks about "returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done." Under them, back up just a little bit, because one of the things that I want to say is there's some really good instructions here for the fifth step when you're working with people if you know what you're supposed to see in the sixth step it's helpful to discuss some of that stuff while you're in the middle of the fifth step. It's talking about seeing things we find objectionable about ourselves. Seeing the things we're not willing to turn to God for help with. So understanding the sixth step, I think, is important, so we can effectively listen to a fifth step. Actually in the fifth step, it talks about that it's important to find someone who can understand what you're trying to do.

Keep in mind that, originally, the book went out to people who didn't have AA meetings around them. So it was a little harder for them to find people who understood what they were trying to do and what and how they were doing it. I think now we can benefit, though, because we have people all around us that have a lot of experience with this. That if they understand where you are going, they can help walk you through that, when you are fifth stepping.

So, it talks about taking the book down from the shelf, we turn to the page which contains the 12 steps, carefully reading the first five proposals. They're talking about reading the first five steps, reminding us here that we are building an arch through we will walk free men (and women) at last. It asks for us to look if our work is solid so far. So, one of the things that I do with their sixth step is walk them through the first five proposals. We talk about the idea that, "Do you find the idea that you lose control over alcohol or drugs objectionable in your life today?" And I have to see that if I'm clear on my first step, then it has to be an easy question. One of the things that I have to be clear on is why do I need an act of God in my life when it comes to alcohol and drugs to save me.

Then we look at step two in "We Agnostics" we look at our agnosticism, how I doubted that there is a power greater than myself. And the result of that was I walked around in my life like I was the only power in my life. Do I find that that's objectionable today in my life? The idea that there is no other power in my life that's going to work in my life except me and that I am just going to have to work real hard to force what I want out of this world. Do I find that objectionable today? Hopefully, I was clear enough from the work I have done that I see I want something more than what I have had.

And then, with the third step, there is the first requirement that I have to be clear that self-will fails me. And if I am clear that self-will has failed me, and I honestly want more in my life than what I had up to this point, and see in the second half of step three how I played God in my life. And if I didn't see it in step three, then, hopefully I've seen it in step four when it gives me this blue print or script, if you like, the script of self well. And all these little scenes in my play each page is like a scene in my little play. Look at it from a sixth step perspective and look back through the fourth step and ask myself did my playing God work?

So when we get to the fourth step, what I usually do is I send them home to do that by themselves. And I asked them to go back through each page and look at each person and ask the things that it talks about for steps six. It talks about if we emphasize willingness as being indispensable are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? I have them review each inventory and look. Can you see the part of that interaction, that behavior, which you find objectionable? And it says, are we now ready to let God remove these things? Can he now take them all, everyone? If I still cling to something I will not let go of, we ask God to help us be willing. So am I clinging to behaviors or resentments or some part of the inventory that I saw about myself that I'm not willing to stop doing. You remember in the beginning of the fourth step, we talked about the value of hanging on to resentments. Resentments will separate you faster than anything from the sunlight of the spirit.

Now, if you doubt that, remember that I said the next time you get pissed off at someone. It just kind of puts me right into self, right? And the spiritual way of life doesn't make room for that. It talks about, are the stones properly in place? Remember? The cornerstone, the Keystone, the foundation in the first step. The cornerstone in the second step of the willingness to believe and the Keystone in the third step. Remember talk about building this arch with which we will walk to freedom? Which is, I consider this arch, the Keystone, is a center stone in this arch and I envision this arch on top of the doorway. I'm going to walk through this door and on the other side of that door is this vision, this concept of a new way of life and that vision is a way of life that understands that if I don't trust that there is a power that will work in my life nothing is going to change for me. It talks about, have we tried to make mortar without sand? Cement, by itself isn't as strong as when you mix sand with it.

When you have seen a lot, you see you've got those people in the program that latch on to AA meetings. They use AA meetings like a lifeboat, they can never get out of the boat otherwise they're in trouble. Can't even go to another town without lining up the meetings in advance. There are the people that I know that it is steps, steps, steps work out of the book and don't go to any social meetings. I think that there is this big picture here. There has to be some kind of balance.

Alcoholics Anonymous is the Fellowship: It is the 12-step process outlined in the big book and it is being in a place where I can work with others. It's not just about one of these things. I think that it is important to understand that right from the beginning. That this is not just about me getting what I can get out of the 12-step process. Going off and working on my relationships and getting the money back. I have to see that this is about a bigger commitment than just what this thing can do for me. You see many examples of this turning the spiritual process into a selfish process. Bragging about how many hours you sit in

meditation. I used to be able to do that when I didn't have a job and I spent a lot of time trying to be one of those people because that's the way a lot of those people around me were. Not that meditation is bad, don't get me wrong, I actually do 16 hours of meditation a day - I do - the other eight hours, I'm sleeping. See, it depends on your definition of meditation. If I'm practicing bringing God into my life, all through the day, then that is a meditation and that is my practice.

But here, I'm not going to be able to be anywhere near that if I don't understand why I need it and to what degree I need it. I have to understand the difference between my character defects and the nature of my defects. I've gone through inventories where people have read a lot of fifth steps and some people listening to my fifth steps have written down little notes for me and the character defects they see in me from reading my fourth step. And you'll see things like controlling: I'm jealous you know: these are the things that everybody can see.

After writing inventory the way it's outlined in the Big Book, and how I have it laid out in the big book awakening, what you'll see is that my defective character and all of those things that you could write out here as my defective character were the things that you have written about your self-seeking and selfishness. These are the selfish things that I do to you or have done to them and this is my selfish thinking that I had while I was doing it. They saw what I did, you saw what you did. They know what I was thinking some of the times. I know what I was thinking. Those are the character defects that I usually see on those lists.

But, in a fifth step, it talks about two things, on the very first paragraph in the fifth step. On page 72, in the first paragraph, it talks about seeing my character defects, but it also talks about the nature of those defects. What's the difference between the defects of my character and the nature of my defects? I compared it to my alcoholism. I could look at my alcoholic problem as how much I drank and the stuff that happened around how much I drank. And trashing the marriage and how I was living. I knew I lost control when they start to drink, I just didn't know that every time I drink I'd lose control. I always had the idea that I had an element of control and I was in the delusion, for a long time, that I had control, until there was such a big problem that there was no more delusion. I started to get in touch with the nature of my problem and that is that there is a level of insanity inside of me that I can't do anything about; that I have a spiritual malady that manifests in the unmanageability that we looked at on page 52, which is conducive to the obsession to drink. And those are the obsessions that will take me to drink; will take an addict to drugs; will take a gambler to gambling.

So the spiritual malady takes me to the obsession - to the physical lack of control. That is the nature of my problem. So, when you use that kind of description here, with the defects, my defective behavior or the defects in my character are the things out here that you would list. But underneath, those are the things that we looked at - the delusions and the fears. Because the fears drive the delusions that results in the thinking that manifested in the actions, the selfish actions that we took.

I can work on the selfish actions. I can say that I am not going to talk bad about you to other people behind your back but maybe I could talk about someone else behind their back. It starts to look like - Joe used to use the analogy of - I haven't seen them in years - those Mole games where the Mole would pop his head out of the hole and you would have to hit it over the

head and then another would pop up over here. That's kind of like me working on my character defects because while I'm focusing on this character defect and I'm not going to do this I'm pissing people off over here. Because at the root of that is something that I cannot work on.

You know, on page 62, in the first paragraph it talks about selfishness self-centeredness that we think is the root of my trouble and how it's driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity. That's what I'm talking about here. And I see that, that gets proven in the fourth column - my fear driving the delusions that result in the thinking that end up in the actions, selfish actions that I take.

I cannot work on my delusions. Does that make sense? I cannot work on my delusions. I cannot work on my fears. And fears don't come from outside of me. I saw from my fear inventory. My fears weren't about them, and my fears are something I manufactured deep down inside. Fear comes from the idea that self-reliance will fail me. And I have to see that that I manufactured fears and from those fears come those delusions and I can't do anything about them myself. I can make those lists of character defects and all I'd get was lists of things that I can try to work on unless I'm 100% clear that there are things about those things - those are just manifestations of the real problem. I cannot do anything about my fears in my delusions on my own but have to have God's help and that's what it's trying to lead me towards.

This whole process has been about getting me to the place where I realize that I need a power greater than myself. You know, I have this tree outside my balcony years ago and every time he grew up, it would block my view so I start cutting off leaves. But naturally the view wasn't quite good enough so, I was on the second floor so I just start hacking off bunches. So here's this big tree and it had this flat top and every year those branches would keep growing back up. And I keep trying to trim down those branches and trim it lower and lower and lower so I get more and more of a view and every year the branches would just keep coming back up. Working on my character defects is kind of like that.

Finally, the owner of that building took the tree out. That was the solution, to get down to the roots. The trouble is, for some reason, I want to hang onto those roots. Because there's a part of me deep down inside that just doesn't seem to get it. And I have to have God's help. It's about understanding how badly I need God to move beyond where I am. I have fears in me. You know, the fears that stop me from writing the book. Not just the spiders and snakes and some of the fears that people write on their inventory. Fears that block you from painting that picture or starting that new job or getting out of the old job or fears that stop you from getting out of that old relationship or into the new one. I can't do. Anything about those myself. Those are part of the root of my problem. Those are part of the nature of my defects.

I have to be really clear on that you know because you know the seventh step starts off with a few words, but they're important words.

Some people say "the seventh step is just the prayer," but I can give this talk on the sixth step and I can give the same talk on the seventh step because it starts off, "When ready." "When ready." What does when ready mean? "When ready," means to me that I am completely clear that I cannot do anything about the root of my trouble. The nature of my defects that

manifest in the bad behavior with the bad thinking that comes out of me. I cannot do anything about it.

And this commitment to a relationship with a power that I might not understand yet – we're only half way through the 12 steps remember there's more to come - if anything, at this point, I should realize that I might not 100% rely on that there is a God out there that's going to change all of this or save me from all this. But hopefully, I've seen enough about myself to know that nothing is going to change relying upon what I've relied upon in the past. It's like I'm in a burning building and the windows open and there are firemen down there saying, "Jump, jump. We will catch you." And the fire - I feel the heat behind me - and it's like I can't go back - because going back means I'm back in to all the stuff I've seen up until this point and there is this leap of faith that I have to take - this leap of faith that if I jump - there will be something down there that is going to catch me. So, the idea here is that it is like a relationship.

If you have a relationship with a person and you ignore that relationship how good is that relationship going to be? Not very good, right? And I see that my relationship with God has been like that. I have completely ignored the possibility that there was a power that would work in my life.

So there is a line that I draw through six and seven -straight down the middle of six and seven - six is bringing everything I've seen from the first five steps and all of the defects I'm aware of now in six to this point and when I can honestly say I am ready to turn to this power.

Then, I say the seventh step prayer and only then. And it's not about me working on my defects; it's not about being stuck in six because I still have character defects. Would you say the way you drank is the defective part of you? Or the way you used drugs is that the defective part of your nature? Has God removed your alcoholism or has he just removed the problem? So who am I to pick and choose the things I am supposed to work on in my life. God removes the problem of my alcoholism, but not the alcoholism.

And my biggest defect is turned into one of my biggest assets to God and the people around me. Because, God can use that defect of character in me to help others. So to sit and stand in judgment of myself based on my behavior and what I do, you know it could be a hard place to operate from - but a lot of people do that right? When I look at myself you know and what I want and what I don't have, you know I can get into that place - what I wished that I was - am I who God would have me be? That everything has fallen into place just as it has to be.

*(Note: This transcription of Dan's recorded talk is as close to the exact words he used as I could make it. I did not try to clean up the grammar but did change a few words for clarity and I'm sure there are a few typos. GB)*