FOUNDATION MEETING

Primary Purpose Group, Dallas — the script as written, word for word

We make certain everyone has a Big Book and begin by referring to the lower right hand corner of the "Dust Jacket" where it reads, "This is the Third Edition of the Big Book, the BASIC TEXT for Alcoholics Anonymous." Or, of course, if they have a Fourth Edition, same message in the middle of the Dust Jacket. We want them to know what ALCOHOLISM is, what the SOLUTION is and HOW to take the ACTION that is necessary to avoid death or insanity by drinking, i.e. to get from the PROBLEM to the SOLUTION.

Now, to the FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION. First published in 1939 and was introduced by stating: (We read the 1st paragraph and then dissect it)
1st sentence tells us who authored the Basic Text for Alcoholics Anonymous.
2nd sentence tells us why they went to the trouble to publish the Basic Text.
3rd sentence suggests the Big Book is all we will ever need to be successful in sobriety.
4th & 5th sentences tells us that the Big Book is also for those that care about us.
6th sentence is supported by the fact that the Big Book has given birth to over 200 anonymous fellowships that have nothing to do with drinking.

Pg. xiv – "The only requirement for membership is an HONEST desire to stop DRINKING." (Traditions Three & Five.) We have lost our understanding of HONEST by the time we decide to come to AA so that requirement has been eliminated but if a person is serious about living sober, they better have an HONEST desire to stop drinking and be willing to follow our directions.

THE FOREWORD TO SECOND EDITION.
Gives a historical account of the 1st 20 years of our history.
How Bill found Dr. Bob.
How they got busy looking for other alcoholics to try to help.
How their success attracted the attention of some of our leading citizens.
How we received some very favorable publicity – Jack Alexander's article.
How the onslaught of new prospects forced Bill to develop the Traditions
And then we hammer the statement on page xx:

> 50% never took another drink
> ½ those who did drink returned and found permanent sobriety
> So, 75%+ who had Sponsors who followed the clear-cut directions in the Big Book were successful in sobriety. Then Bill published the 12&12 in 1953 and by 1965, our success rate had dropped to 50%. Unfortunately, many newcomers are encouraged to try to use the 12&12 as their source of directions. Bill W. was the principal author of the Big Book and the sole author of the 12&12. On page 17 of the 12&12, Bill stated, "The Big Book was and still is the basic text for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Then, in the late 60's, we started "discussion/participation meetings" that failed to stick to our singleness of purpose so by 1980, we had dropped to 33%. The result of which was we started ignoring the practice of focusing on OUR Solution and we drifted into group therapy. For recent years, our success rate has decreased to what appears to be less than 5% for those finding as much as 5 years sobriety. (Refer to Bob Bacon's article and the information from "The Price of Don't Drink and Go To Meetings," "What Happened" plus the XXXXX InterGroup stats and BOX 459 stats.)

While there has been a dramatic change in our Fellowship, the Program has remained unchanged; consequently, the Fourth Edition reads the same as the First Edition.

Page 30 – Middle paragraph – "We learned we had to ….. The 1st step in recovery." In our heart of hearts, we must know that we are the victims of a killer disease before we can begin recovery.

Return to THE DOCTOR'S OPINION, page xxvi (3RD) – xxviii (4th), We identify who Dr. Silkworth was and how he wound up at Towne's Hospital. How his "opinion" opened the door for recovery. (Until we understand a problem, we cannot find a solution. I use an example of walking out to my car, putting the key in the ignition and the damn thing won't start; PROBLEM. I can sit on my butt and talk about the car not starting until hell freezes over but that will get me nowhere. I look under the hood and see that the battery cable has corroded. I know what the PROBLEM is so the SOLUTION becomes very evident. I need a new battery cable but that doesn't solve the PROBLEM. I still must take the action necessary to obtain an new cable, replace the bad one and now I'm on my way; understand the problem, know what the solution is and then take the action to make the solution a reality.)

From the 1st paragraph on page xxvi, we present the "ALLERGY" which makes us powerless over alcohol. The phenomenon of "CRAVING" which is the manifestation of the "ALLERGY."

The last paragraph on pg xxvi is where we find the initial information regarding the UNMANAGEABILITY, the alcoholic mind that cannot distinguish the truth from the false. We carefully dissect the whole paragraph. First, what is the "effect" alcoholic men and women get from drinking alcohol?

Why is it so important that we have this spiritual event occur in our lives? Well Dr. Silkworth said that "we drink essentially because we like the effect produced by alcohol". What is the effect an alcoholic gets from drinking? When we alcoholics had a few drinks, we were amazed at the change in the way we thought and the way we felt. A few drinks produced an "entire psychic change".
Let's go to page 83 in the Big Book and examine the Ninth Step Promises by beginning each promise with, "In the early days of my drinking, when I had a few drinks……".

When I had a few drinks, I knew a new freedom and a new happiness.
Did you? (I sure did)

When I had a few drinks, I didn't regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
Did you ever come out of a blackout in a place you hadn't planned on visiting with people you hadn't planned on being with and learned you had done some things you sure wish you hadn't done? Because of the guilt and remorse, it was to be a secret? Then go into a bar and have a few drinks and tell some stranger the whole story? (I certainly did)

When I had a few drinks, I comprehended the word serenity and I knew peace.
Did you too find that serenity and peace of mind replaced the turmoil with a few drinks? (Oh yeah)

When I had a few drinks, I didn't regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.
How willing were you to share your life's story with a poor drunk who had just had a really bad experience? (Loved to talk about how bad my life was)

When I had a few drinks, that feeling of uselessness and self-pity would disappear.
With a few drinks, did you feel that you just might really have a purpose in this world and feel sorry for those critters that didn't have what you had although you just weren't too sure what it was you had? (Almost every time)

When I had a few drinks, I lost interest in selfish things and gained interest in my fellows.
Did a few drinks make you a little more interested in people, especially of the opposite sex. (Can I buy you a drink honey?)

When I had a few drinks, self-seeking slipped away.
Did a few drinks make you somewhat generous? (Drinks for everyone!)

When I had a few drinks, my whole attitude and outlook upon life changed.
Did a few drinks take you from a gray, gloomy day to one that was bright and hopeful? (From a shade of brown to rosy pink with just a couple)

When I had a few drinks, fear of people and financial insecurity left me.
Did you enjoy being in the company of people sober? (Leave me alone!)
Did a few drinks diminish your concern for your financial difficulties? (How am I gong to pay all these bills? Think I better have a couple of drinks and figure it out.)

When I had a few drinks, I intuitively knew how to handle situations that used to baffle me. Did you too find that you were able to think much more clearly and wisely with a few drinks? (You bet! I had answers to questions that hadn't been asked.)

The UNMANAGEABILITY is clearly presented in the last sentence of that paragraph.
From the article, "Ways to Stop Drinking", you can get some ideas of how we apply the information Dr. Silkworth proposed.

The newcomer is also reminded that they need be mindful of over-the-counter meds such as cough syrup, mouth wash, flavor extracts, etc and the their health providers should know that they are alcoholics so the professionals will be mindful of what they prescribe. We emphasize that they themselves are responsible for their sobriety so be honest with those who have a need to know.

We have now helped the newcomers understand the PROBLEM. We MAY breeze through BILL"S STORY by looking at the events that describe the progression of alcoholism in his life.

Pg 2 – Lois is on his ass about his drinking.

Pg 3 – Jittery in the morning

Pg 5 – Liquor ceased to be a luxury; it became a necessity. (lying about his drinking, hiding his bottles, etc.)

Lost an opportunity to make some money because he drank. Made up his mind to never touch another drop. Returned home drunk.

Pg 7 – Met Dr. Silkworth and learned what was wrong with him.

Pg 8 – 1st paragraph, Bill surrendered to the PROBLEM; Step One.

We use the next paragraph to exemplify the simplicity of our program; 1st sentence - a broken man. Last sentence – a wonderful life as the result of having taken the action Ebby prescribed for him.

Pg 10 & 11 – Bill's rebellion at the idea of a spiritual solution identifying him as a hard nosed agnostic.

Pg 12 – The freedom and responsibility we are given to develop an idea of God that we can begin to bet our life on.

We then explain the simplicity of Step Two by the fact that Bill saw his old drinking buddy, who was supposedly in the nut house for alcoholic insanity, sober. Both of them had been POWERLESS over alcohol but Ebby was sober and Bill was going to die. Ebby had found the POWER that Bill was unaware of. Ebby gave Bill HOPE, the beginning of "Coming to believe." From that HOPE, Bill finally became willing to try Ebby's plan of action.

Pg 13 – Entering Towne's Hospital on December 11, 1934 going into DT's.

Taking Step Three on the 3rd day of his sobriety.

Ebby visiting Bill in the hospital on the 4th and 5th days to help Bill take the action Ebby had learned to apply to his life, the result of which was a Spiritual Experience. Bill left the Hospital on December 18, 1934, at the end of 7 days, and lived 36 years without taking another drink and we are here because of the action that Bill took, not the meetings he attended.

We now identify the meaning of Step One, POWERLESS because of the allergy; UNMANAGEABILITY due to the mind that cannot remember that we have the allergy. It can only remember THE SENSE OF EASE AND COMFORT WHICH COMES AT ONCE BY TAKING A FEW DRINKS. Therefore we are POWERLESS over our Body and POWERLESS over our mind where alcohol is concerned. We are screwed!!!

From the HOPE of hearing a RECOVERED alcoholic tell their story of "What they were like, what happened and what they are like now" or reading the 44 stories in the Big Book, is the beginning of Step Two. If lack of POWER is the PROBLEM then A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES must be the SOLUTION. And we see that the RECOVERED alcoholic has found that POWER. It takes no great mind to see that if LACK OF POWER or POWERLESSNESS is my PROBLEM then A POWER GREATER THAN MYSELF must be the SOLUTION. Once I can see that, I am faced with a very simple DECISION; "Am I or am I not willing to follow the clear-cut directions for recovery?" But I need someone who knows how to do this.

So the simplicity of Step Three is to ask the RECOVERED alcoholic, "Will you be my sponsor?" and be willing to do precisely what the sponsor tells you to do!

To determine if you have made a good choice in sponsors, it is pretty easy to tell. If they tell you to open your Big Book to page xi and STUDY to page 43, that is a good start. These 51 pages will get you ready to see if you are ready to move on. Look at the 1st sentence on page 44. It tells you why it is so important to be thorough in your study to this point. From this study, we can separate the alcoholic from the non-alcoholics, which is so vital to the success of your group and AA as a whole.

Now take the test; "If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, (How many of you have promised you'd never drink again? Appears you failed to MANAGE that decision so your life is UNMANAGEABLE where alcohol is concerned) or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, (How many of you cannot start drinking without getting drunk? It would appear that you too are POWERLESS over alcohol.), Step One.

If that is the case, you may be suffering from an illness which ONLY a spiritual experience will conquer. (How many meetings must you attend to have a spiritual experience? Or------ How many Steps must you take to have this blessed Promise become a reality in your life?)

Page 44 through page 57 will open the door for you to be able to consider your own conception of the God of your understanding.

Page 58 answers that stupid comment that we hear too often in meetings, "I don't know how it works." The 1st sentence tells us how it works – rarely have we seen a person fail who has carefully followed the clear-cut directions in the Big Book.

The Program of Alcoholics Anonymous is a Spiritual Program. On page 59, we will find the 1st of several prayers; one or more for each and every Step from Step Three through Step Twelve, which reminds us that the God of our understanding is the source of our recovery. We learn to invite Him to be the Solution to all our problems.

On page 62, we are told what our REAL Problem is; selfishness—self-centeredness, but we can never see it without some method of revealing the truth to us. So we make a DECISION to do precisely what our Sponsor tells us to do and announce that decision in a prayer as presented on page 63.

One of the beautiful things about the Big Book is that it will tell us WHEN to take a Step, HOW to take the Step, WHAT the results or PROMISES of having taken the Step will be and provides us with the PRAYERS that make certain we are inviting the God of our understanding to be very involved in our recovery.

The last sentence on page 63 tells us that we now have to get busy and take the rest of the Steps.

Steps Four and Five are diagnostic Steps to learn if what they told us on page 62 is true for us. The clear-cut directions for Step Four are found on pages 64 through 71 and there are five prayers for Step Four.

On page 75, we find the clear-cut directions for Step Five and the two Fifth Step Prayers.

On page 76, we find the direction for Step Six which, is nothing more than a commitment to God that we will become students and practitioners of the rest of the Big Book and there we will find the Sixth Step Prayer.

On page 76, we find the Seventh Step Prayer, which is to be prayed after we have told God we are going to do our part, now please do Your part by making me different. This Prayer is the completion of the Prayer we prayed on page 63

On page 76, we will be most pleased to learn that if we have carefully followed the directions in working Step Four, that Step Eight is all but a done deal.

From page 76 to page 83 are the directions for taking Step Nine and the four Ninth Step Prayers are there.

Having carefully followed the path the 1st 100 laid down for us, we now have had a spiritual awakening/experience and have joined the 1st 100 as RECOVERED alcoholics. The Ninth Step Promises describe that blessed event.

On page 64, we take the 1st action to recover from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. By the time we get to page 83, we have RECOVERED. We have joined the 1st 100. We have been given the POWER that we lacked to survive alcoholism. Carefully following the clear-cut directions outlined in just 20 pages of our Basic Text produces the miracle of recovery.

We are now to start our Spiritual Growth and that occurs in Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve.

The clear-cut directions for Step Ten are contained in the paragraph on page 84 beginning with “We continued…….”

A running start for learning how to communicate with the God of your understanding is very adequately covered on pages 86, 87 and 88.

And now that we have received the POWER, it is our primary job to pass that on to the next newcomer God puts in our life. The clear-cut directions for Sponsorship are contained in Chapter Seven. But you won’t find the Twelfth Step Prayer until you have reached the last page of the Basic Text; “Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick.”

There you have it. So utterly simple yet so garbled in our meetings. I challenge you to be a part of the Solution and not a part of the Problem. The simplest guide that I follow in working with others is, “If it isn’t in the Big Book, they don’t need to be exposed to it.”

If you are encouraged to wait until you have a better understanding of what OUR Program is about, I have one question for you; “How well did you like sex before you tried it?” Well, you won’t know a damn ting about recovery either until you have taken the action of taking the Steps, precisely as they were given to us.

Word for word from the Primary Purpose Group’s Foundation Meeting script, foundation-meeting.doc (a Word file, author Clifford Bishop, 2003) — the same file the group has posted since 2004, today linked on ppgaadallas.org as “Foundation Meeting Format.” Spelling, capitals, punctuation and page numbers are the script’s own; only lines broken with a hard return in the middle of a sentence are joined. Its slips — promise four repeats promise two’s line; “Towne’s” for Towns Hospital; third-edition page numbers and “44 stories” (the fourth edition has 42); the 12&12 p. 17 line paraphrased — are corrected in the study guide, foundation-meeting.handout.html.