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0:00:14 John: Hello and welcome to AA Beyond Belief, the podcast. Today, Benn and I will be discussing Steps Eight and Nine, made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all, and made direct amends to such people wherever possible except would to do so would injure them or others. We'll also have a discussion about the promises and find out why I resent them. Hey Benn, how are you doing?

0:00:39 Benn: Good, John, how are you?

0:00:40 John: Excellent. So, are you ready to talk about Steps Eight and Nine today?

0:00:45 Benn: I sure am. I re-read my literature like a good AA member would and I'm ready to go.

0:00:51 John: I did too and yeah, I'm... I don't read the AA literature that much anymore like I used to. Because when I used to go to the traditional meetings, especially at my old home group, we read the 12 and 12 and the Big Book all the time and I just don't read it that much anymore. So going back to it now and reading it with this new perspective I have after being two years in agnostic meetings, it's a very, very different experience. And I read the 12 and 12 and the Big Book about these two steps. And they were strikingly different. In the Big Book... And it's really interesting because the Big Book obviously was written right after Bill had... It was written in 1939. Bill had his experience at Towns Hospital in 1934.

0:01:41 John: All the people in AA at that time were just fresh out of the Oxford Group. So they were very, very into the spiritual experience. And what I found in reading the Big Book when it came to these two steps was that it seemed like, to me anyway, and maybe it was just my perspective the way that I am now as an atheist. But it seemed to me that the whole purpose of the steps was to help the person grow closer to God so he can have a spiritual awakening. Whereas when I read the 12 and 12, it was a little bit different. In the 12 and 12, it all started off with, "This step is all about personal relationships." And then it started talking more about the intricacies of personal relationships rather than stressing the whole God thing. I thought that was interesting. But when I was reading it in the Big Book, I was thinking the entire time, "This is out of date. This totally out of date." [chuckle]

0:02:37 Benn: Yeah. The 12 and 12 is more practical, it seemed like. And the Big Book was more... Had a lot of hyperbole and very salesmanship and like you said very much about the spiritual experience to be had with this, and almost... There were a few sections in there where it's like, "Don't hesitate to bring up the spiritual aspect of why you're doing this and it almost sounds like... "

0:03:03 John: Yeah, exactly, I caught that too. It's like they were expecting the people to almost evangelize, wanting everyone to know that they've got God now, or something.

0:03:13 Benn: Yeah, like Ebby coming to Bill in his kitchen that one time and Sandy's got God and it's almost... It struck me as they felt like they were God's spokesperson for sometime in the future when this person might look back and be like, "Oh, when Bill made his amend to me, wow, that really was godly." I don't know.

0:03:35 John: Exactly. Well, let's see. When I look at my experience with these two steps, for most

of my time in AA, I always felt like I didn't do a great job with these steps. But the way I feel about it now, it's a little bit different. I think I did it just right. Because I think if I would've sat down with a lot of people in my family and had a direct conversation about all the specific things that I did to them or whatever, if I would have direct conversations like that with my family, I don't think it would've done a whole lot of good. The way that I approach my amends was this, first of all, after I'd done Steps Four and Five, I already knew who I needed to make amends to. That was truly from my fourth step was that list. And it says that in the Big Book, that that's what we do. Although the 12 and 12 is different. It says that we actually make a list.

0:04:34 John: But anyway, so I knew. And I had two types of amends. I had family members and I had people that I worked with. And that was basically it, those two groups. And with my family, the person that I did the most harm to was my father because he's the one I felt like I was letting down. He's the one that I was draining financially, he was the one that was getting me out of jail and getting me out of problems and he was the one I was lying to. He was the one I really feel like I had done the most harm to. And my memory about my father was that when I first told him I was an alcoholic and I was going to AA, he broke down in tears and he started taking bottles of booze and pouring it down the sink. That was his first reaction when I told him I was an alcoholic.

0:05:35 John: So later, when I was learning, when I was becoming aware of all the problems I was having with him, I just felt like it wouldn't... To drag this crap out again would just cause more harm and make our relationship more difficult. So what I did with my father as far as making amends go is I just changed who I was in that I was no longer a drunk that he had to rescue all the time. I lived independently and self-sufficiently, and I was there for him, so that any family gathering I would be there, whereas in the past I wouldn't. I was a son to him, finally, I think. So that when he finally died, and I was with him when he died, I was able to let him know that I loved him, and I felt like when he left that there wasn't really any unfinished business. So even though I didn't sit down with him and say, "Hey dad, I'm an alcoholic and I did terrible things to you. These are all the things that I did and I'm so sorry." Even though I didn't do that I feel like I did the proper thing with him, that I used good judgement the way I did those amends.

0:06:45 John: And I don't wanna take too much time Benn, but then the other group of people that I made amends to were the work people where the situation here was I had to go to work downtown, and downtown Kansas City is compact, it's kinda small, it's not a huge city, and so you're gonna run into people all the time, and so I knew I was gonna run into my boss, my old boss who fired me for drinking, and I was so humiliated, I didn't feel like I could look him in the eye, and I needed to be able to literally walk the streets without being afraid to run into him, and being able to look him in the eye.

0:07:21 John: So I went down, and I went to his office, and I sat down with him, and I basically told him that he and the other people that terminated my employment were correct, that I did have a problem drinking, and that they did the right thing, and that I'm glad that they did it because that's what got me to get help. And I then I let him know that I'm doing fine. Anyway, he was really, really happy about that, so that was my way of making amends to him, but it was totally selfish reasons, I did it solely because I needed to be able to look him in the eye when I walked on the streets, and that's exactly what happened, when I would go out to lunch, or whatever, I'd see him on the street I could say, "Hey, hi," look him in the eye, had I not done that, I couldn't. So those were the types of amends that I was making. What was your experience with it?

0:08:17 Benn: Similar to yours, I think there's more nuance to this. The books, they both are

literature books actually, they talk about the nuance to this, that every situation...

0:08:27 John: That's true.

0:08:27 Benn: Might be a little bit different, I did appreciate that in our literature. As far as just formal amends and sitting down, I did some, but not a ton, not as many, the book talks something about sometimes situations just present themselves, and I remember being back home one time and I ran into somebody at Target, and it was... I don't know, I was probably two, three years sober, so I was pretty, solidly on board, and I just ran into this person, and we talked a little bit, but it was awkward, and then I just said, "Back in the day I really treated you really poorly. I said some awful things to you." And they were like, "Oh, no, don't worry about it man. But we were all drunk and doing this and doing that." But I find that sometimes when I make amends with certain people, and it's not my job to control how they react, but some people are not comfortable with that face to face honesty like that, and that was one of the situations where I had to almost, I don't wanna say force the other person to listen to what I had to say, but I had to... They wanted to shove it to the side, make it not a big deal, even though I knew it was to them, and I said, "No," I go, "You're being modest about this," I go, "It was a really big deal, because I can remember exactly what I said to you, and how that probably made you feel, and I just wanna let you know that I understand that today, and that I feel awful for that. And I wanna apologize to you."

0:09:55 Benn: And I walked away from that particular experience feeling really good, because we both reconnected in a way, and like you said, I would run into this person when I was back home a lot, so it was a very human reconnection, it wasn't... Again, I think the way the book talks sometimes it's like we're this broken, messed up thing and if people weren't broken and messed up like all us alcoholics are the world would be a fine place, and we're the only ones screwing things up. Well, I think this other person took their own inventory when I was sitting there with them too and said, "I could've handled this different, handled that different." And I said, "Man, obviously we both could've, and I just wanna apologize for what I said to you, and how I treated you." And it was just a really cool, connecting moment. So I guess I did more of a formal amend, I tried to with my dad, but then it turned out like what you said to, because my dad, he also was in the program.

0:10:56 John: Oh, I didn't know that.

0:10:57 Benn: Yeah, so he was sober six and a half years before he died from liver failure. So I think he understood what was going on, but then my dad even said to me too, "Well, you weren't as bad as me, you didn't do as many bad things as I did." And I'm like... My dad was like your dad, he bailed me out of a lot of situations. And I think a lot of that was partly due to his guilt because I think he knew he had a problem and that that probably affected me on some level too. So it was just this toxic thing back and forth, but I can remember, you were talking about it too, and just making living amends and moving forward, and being able to... He passed away and I didn't feel like I had a burden on me about it, and it was cool. But I will say, to me this is working the steps in general, it's like you're prepared to make different amends at different times, and there were some, no matter how searching I was when I first did this about making my list, there were some things I forgot about, or I wasn't quite ready to deal with them, I guess, 'cause I don't feel like I put him off on purpose.

0:12:02 Benn: But back when I was in high school, I had a huge party at my house while my mom was gone and of course lied about it and someone had gone upstairs to her bedroom and stolen three or four rings and it wasn't so much the value of the rings, but it was the sentimental value. I know

one of them was her moms rings and I had absolutely forgot about that and this was probably just two years ago so I was probably seven years sober. And I just went to my mom and I'm like, "I'm gonna do the formal AA thing here." And I did it in a very measured way and I was like, "Mom, I just need to make an amends for you. I had that big party when you were gone one time." And I totally denied it. It was one of those things where I'm like, "No, mom. There wasn't a party here. Duh." The whole house smelled like stale beer and... You know?

[laughter]

0:12:49 John: Yeah.

0:12:50 Benn: And acted like she was crazy and then I said... And she goes, "Oh, well. You're just getting things figured out." She's making excuses for me. I said, "No, mom. It was a really, really awful thing that happened." 'Cause I know... I told her exactly, 'cause I knew what rings were gone. And she didn't quite understand what I was trying to do or what I was trying to say and I know our book says to explain it to somebody and I kinda did but I also think that advice is stupid but...

0:13:17 John: Yeah.

0:13:18 Benn: She was just like, "It's no big deal. It's this, that." And I kept at it with her and maybe I tried too hard to get her to accept my amend, but I was just like, "No, mom. It really was. It was a big deal. That stuff meant a lot to you." And she said to me, I could tell she didn't understand. She's like, "Look, I don't know what you need to hear from me to get over this, but you're just gonna have to figure how to move forward from this."

0:13:39 John: That's funny.

0:13:40 Benn: And I was just like, "Okay, thank you mom."

[laughter]

0:13:44 Benn: It was interesting. I've gone to meetings where I hear people talk about, "I drove through the city park back home and I tore up their grass and so I went back and I made financial amends and paid \$750 to the parks and crew and this and that." And I'm like, "Wow." Sometimes I hear that and I'm like, "Man, I need to rethink some of my amends and go back to every little thing like that 'cause I don't remember all that stuff." But I'm sure I caused problems but sometimes it gets to be this show-off to see, "Here's the length I went to make an amend to somebody."

0:14:17 John: Yeah. And I think the bottom line is, you gotta do what you gotta do for your own conscience. It doesn't... If I had done something and it wasn't bothering my conscience, and it wasn't interfering with my sobriety, then it isn't necessary for me to make amends is how I see it. But, if it's something where... If I'm afraid to walk on the streets and look somebody in the eye, that affects my quality of life and my sobriety and how I feel about myself, that's an amend I need to make. But if I ran over a stop sign or [chuckle] I tore up the grass at the city park, well, the tax payers will probably took care of it and I probably forgot about it or maybe I already paid a fine or did some time in jail. I don't know. Some things for me... If it affected me emotionally, those were the things that I felt like I needed to make amends for. I also Benn, have a thing because of the the type of work I that I do for a living and the experience that I've had, when it came to financial amends, like in the Big Book, it's written in the 1930s in a much more simple time where you could go to the

local bank and you could say, "Yeah Joe, I was drunk and so therefore I wasn't able to pay my car payment and I'm so sorry. Will you make this arrangement?" Or whatever. And it maybe the banker would... It would be, "Oh yeah, sure, Charlie. We'll work this out. No problem."

0:15:53 John: Well, it's just not that way anymore. And I think that they need to be careful and they need to understand a little bit. In other words... I guess for me, I did make financial amends because I paid my debts on everything. But looking back and knowing how things work now, if I were struggling, starting out like I was where I could barely put food on the table and stuff like that, I wouldn't worry about the collection agencies and the credit cards and all that crap because basically at that point, your creditors have already made the decision and have already written off the debt and now it's probably with some stupid collection agency and you're not gonna do yourself really any good by paying it 'cause your credit's already damaged. So, I would guess that if paying it just helps you emotionally, then maybe you should do it and especially if it's not hurting you financially. But otherwise, I think there's other ways around that. You can rebuild your credit and move on, but... I don't know what I'm trying to say there, but it's just the world is different now. It's not like it was back in the 1930s where you knew the guy at the bank and you could just talk about that. I wouldn't go to some creditor and tell him that I was an alcoholic and that's why I fell behind in my bills. I would never do that.

0:17:22 Benn: They'd probably send you to some 1-800 center. They'd go, "Hey, we got some crazy on line three again." Well, there's a very old school tone sometimes in meetings or even in the book about this too. And it's almost this idea as if you can make the past perfect and make everything right and then all of the sudden, "Leave it to Beaver." Life goes on forward from there. And it's the language used like "repair, damage, done". Yeah, we can, but it's a different healing that goes on than this... It's almost like you can picture them standing before God and I made everything fine before I was done. It's not... I don't... That's just not the way I look at it.

0:18:07 John: Yeah. In the Big Book it's really different, because in the Big Book, it was... When I was reading the Big Book, it was like, "Okay," I have a mental picture of what was going on with these people and I understand it. Because, there's a stark difference from alcoholism to sobriety. And when you first get sober, you do have this pink cloud experience where, "Man, things are just so different." The colors are more vibrant and you feel alive and you're recognizing that you're able to do things that you've never been able to do before. And these people were experiencing that and relating it to having an experience with God. So they really probably felt like they were on some type of a new spiritual Godly, holy path. And they probably wanted to express that to other people. And I think that's probably why the Big Book was saying, "Hey, hold back a little bit on this religious stuff, when you start talking to people making amends."

0:19:16 Benn: Right.

0:19:17 John: But I was thinking... You know what it reminded me of? I don't know if you ever saw the movie, "When a Man Loves a Woman"?

0:19:23 Benn: Yeah, yep.

0:19:23 John: That was an excellent movie. And Meg Ryan in that movie, she did a really good job playing an alcoholic in early recovery. And the thing that got me about that movie when you watch Meg Ryan is, when she was sober coming out of treatment, she was so self-absorbed and she was so... She was kinda goofy. And she was so self-absorbed and so into her recovery and her program,

and she wasn't really paying attention to the harm that she did to her husband, who had just gone through hell. Well, that's how it really is in real life. Us, alcoholics when we're first getting sober, we're a little bit goofy. And I don't think that we're really in tune with exactly how we've impacted the people around us. So, it's like when the Big Book was cautioning these people say, "Hey, don't go crazy on this God talk with people when you're making amends." Maybe they had that experience where they were doing that. And I could almost see that, because I could see me doing that. If you rush out too soon in your recovery, you might not do it in quite the right way. So, this might be something that you really wanna take some time with, I think.

0:20:43 Benn: Yeah. There's baby steps to be made. And that's why, when I hear the old timers talk about, "Well, way back in the day, we'd do the 12 steps in a week and blah, blah, blah." And I'm just... I can't even fathom that will be any good for you. It's just... Like you're saying there's... It wasn't possible for me to fully grasp exactly the ways I had affected so many people. And it's one of those things that comes with time, I think. And again, they say that for a very good reason to not stress the spiritual with certain people. I don't think you should stress the spiritual with anyone. Nobody gives a shit if we've found God. I don't think...

0:21:22 John: Yeah, [chuckle] it doesn't matter.

0:21:23 Benn: It's almost like an excuse I think.

0:21:25 John: Exactly.

0:21:26 Benn: If you say that to somebody when you're doing it, "Oh, I know I was an asshole before, but don't worry I got God now. So it's okay." People don't care about that. I think, when it comes to making a decent amend, it is about understanding and helping the other person see. Not helping them, but when you have a depth of understanding of just how much... You're able to empathize with someone else and imagine how you likely made them feel or possibly made them feel. And if you can communicate that in a decent manner to somebody, there's healing to be found on both sides of that. And, it can be a great thing. It can be a really, really great thing. And it is about getting out of that self-centeredness and selfishness and just feeling connected. But like our book also warns us, both the books, we don't always run into that when we go to make an amend. But I think we have a better chance if we're prepared for it. And this is where I can advocate for sure having... Well, some people would say a sponsor. But I would say, it's good to talk to somebody about these things before you do. A therapist, a friend, sponsor. Because, they can really help. I found that talking to others really helps with my expectations about how something's going to go.

0:22:40 John: I think so too. And especially, when you're doing something that involves other people. Because, we can do serious harm to people and that's one thing about this step, when it comes to our literature, it's very clear. You don't do this when it could harm another person. But the problem is, we are so messed up, that I don't think... We have to have a really good understanding of exactly what harm we did before we go out and start talking to people, I think. Because, sometimes the harm is so great that you better just leave that person alone. That's the best amend you could make.

0:23:17 Benn: And you were talking about, it's so easy to get... If you're really fired up and you're on that pink cloud and things are rolling, which I don't know how often that happens. It does happen I think, but there's a part of the book that made it sound like everybody gets that way. Well, after

I've read this book, of course I'm gonna be running out here and then rush off...

[chuckle]

0:23:33 Benn: Exactly, exactly.

0:23:34 Benn: But it is good to get cautioned on that, because it is so easy to just get swept away with that. And I'm gonna do this and I'm gonna do that. And it's like, "No, no, no. Just take it..." You can hear it in the room sometimes, when someone's pretty new and they're gung-ho. And they're going and it's... Not to be negative, but it's like you think in your head, "Whoa, that person's gonna hit a wall here sometime."

0:23:54 John: Yep. And it did work better for me when I just waited like you said for the opportunities to present themselves. And the amends that I would make would always be a conversational style. I remember making an amend to my little brother, who was gonna come visit me in Kansas City. He was driving up to visit me. He was living in Lawrence at the time and I got off work and I decided I was just gonna have a couple of beers before I went to see him, and of course, I get totally drunk and I don't show up.

0:24:34 Benn: Right.

0:24:35 John: And finally, I don't know how he gets to my apartment or whatever, but he says that he saw me just... He thought that I was in pain, I was just writhing in pain or something. I don't even remember. I was that drunk. But anyway, so that was an experience where he was happy, looking forward to seeing me. I was happy, looking forward to seeing him. I decide to have a few drinks and ruin the whole damn thing. Where I wasn't there for him. So I had a conversation with him about that many, many years later. And I'd been sober for a long time. I don't even know how it came up. We were just talking, and I said, "Robert, you remember that?" And I said, "I'm really sorry," but that's how drinking was for me. I would lose control like that. And it wasn't like I needed to say I was sorry or anything. It was just a way to say, "I remember that. I remember that. I remember that day."

0:25:34 Benn: I've got, for sure, a couple amends I haven't made but for good reason because they would be to cause harm, one with an ex-girlfriend for sure. Man, we just had an awful toxic relationship back and forth, and not to put off what I did wrong, but we were both just awful to each other. She's married now and lives in Minneapolis, and it's not gonna do me any good to run up there and knock on her door and show up at her and her husband's house and apologize for that.

0:26:05 John: Absolutely not.

0:26:06 Benn: And there's a case where I consider what the whole relationship was like. It wasn't just me, the drunk, taking everything out on her. Her, the codependent, that tried to carry me all the time. It wasn't like that. It was a dual harmful relationship, which again, that's not to make light of what I did wrong in the relationship, but it's not going to do any good. Now, if I ran into her somewhere back home, 'cause there's a chance we could cross paths somewhere back there, and it wasn't, depending on what the situation was, I wouldn't hesitate to stop and talk to her and say, "I was really awful, difficult person to be with, and blah, blah, blah." But also, yeah, I don't know. As I even talk about her right now, I'd be scared to death she'd think I'd want to get back together with her or something if I said that, so maybe it's not a good idea.

0:26:55 Benn: This is a real nuanced thing. It's good to talk to other people about. And I was saying earlier too, about expectations. I find when I'm sponsoring people and helping guide them through this, I just try and walk them through each situation and what could come up, like, "Well, what if she responds this way?" Or, "You need to be prepared for this." 'Cause again, what it comes down to in recovery is, learning about not having expectations and being able to deal with whatever comes up. Yeah, that's...

0:27:27 John: Tell me this, Benn. Do you think it's even really truly necessary to do this?

0:27:31 Benn: Well, our book would warn us, John, as you know, that we're playing with danger if we don't.

0:27:41 John: God isn't gonna help us if we don't do that.

0:27:43 Benn: Right, right, right. Nothing worthwhile can be accomplished until we do so. That's what I wrote down. That's a quote from the book. Again, that's that all or nothing thinking. No, do I think people can stay sober without doing this? Absolutely. Have I found benefit from it? Yes, but almost more in the way of what you're talking about, like with your little brother. Not always some... 'Cause sometimes when I hear the apologies or amends talked about in our literature, it's this grandiose alcoholic thinking, like, "Oh, I'm gonna make everything right now with doing this," or, "I'm going to make this other person..." And I'm sure you'll agree with this, I would imagine, but there are times I went to make an amend to somebody or apologize to somebody and they didn't remember what the hell I was talking about.

0:28:28 John: Yeah. That's right. In the Big Book, it describes the scene, which I find creepy, where the father gathers the family around and tries to tell them about the new path he's on and about how his drinking made him a bad father or whatever. I don't know. I think that's weird. I think as a kid, I would be troubled by that. I think it's almost better for the father just to not drink and start treating his family right.

0:28:54 Benn: Yeah. And again, it's... Well, our book and literature warns us about it too, but it's like, we've got to be careful not to make a grandiose statement too early. It's to me, with a little bit more time in, it's a little bit easier to say something and have it not be one of those false promises that we make to everybody again. But then I wrote this when I was talking about that too. I've got a younger guy, who I sponsor, and he still goes out to the bars with his girlfriend and friends.

0:29:22 Benn: I'm always like, "Well, I don't know." But he doesn't quite own the fact that he doesn't drink around them yet. He's always got excuses for why he's not drinking, and I think that can be okay in the early going. I don't think we have to explain to somebody that we're an alcoholic or whatever, but there's a time in my own recovery where I just owned the fact that I was an alcoholic. I didn't use that word with other people, but I just owned the fact that I couldn't drink. And that I didn't drink, and that that was okay. And that's when my recovery became really personal and real to me, when I didn't feel like I had to hide it, where I had to make excuses for it. I just... It could be something as basic as just saying, "Oh, no, I used up all my fun tickets," or, "I drank too much when I was younger, I'm done now." It doesn't have to be some grandiose thing. But I do think, somewhere along the way, we have to be able to own it, because there's nothing wrong with not drinking.

0:30:14 Benn: And I will say, that's one thing AA did for me, was it made it okay to be a non-drinker. There are plenty of us out there who have found that we don't drink very well. When it comes down to it, there's nothing wrong with not drinking. Especially when we're early sober, it feels like we're the freak that, and we're the only one that doesn't. But, man, there's plenty of people that don't even have drinking problems that don't really drink.

0:30:43 John: Right, that's true. That's true. My wife is one. She never has been a drinker.

0:30:47 Benn: So, I guess my point was saying that is I think it's important, at some point, we just own the fact that we can't drink, so... And that's when it becomes real, I think. Because it's almost like making a commitment to ourselves. Because even when I don't... How many times did I promise somebody or myself that I wouldn't drink, or I wouldn't drink that much again? And then I just didn't do anything about it. It ended up the same way it always was. So I found, this time, I still haven't ever said to myself, "I'm never drinking again." Now, I don't mean that I'm going to drink again. But the talk is cheap, is what I learned. It's like, it doesn't matter if I say, "I'm never gonna drink again." That is the commitment that I'm making. And I have plans to. But it's not about saying, "I'm not gonna drink," because I said that tons of times before I came here. I'm willing to do today what I found works for me to not drink, One day at a time.

0:31:39 John: Right. So, in the 12 and 12, when it talks about, and it says, right in the beginning it says that, something about, this is about repairing personal relationships, which I think is worthy. Is this a good way of doing it? [chuckle] I'm asking these tough questions.

0:31:54 Benn: Well, no, it can be. It can be. But again, I'll come back to what I just said and I'm sorry to repeat myself. It's about the nuance of it. It's not about old Pappy is gonna come down, and have a talk with with the whole family, [chuckle] and here's Pappy's new life. And we're all gonna live great from here forward. But it is, I'll say this, too. I think I've said this on this podcast. Learning how to apologize is an important thing, period, just as for a human being, my mother... I was talking to my brother and my sister about this, this year earlier. And I said, "Have you ever known Mom to ever apologize for anything?" And they said, "Now, that I think about it... " And we weren't being mean about it. It was just like, "No, I've never heard her apologize for anything." And so, it is a good thing. And it's, I suppose, is humility in action to realize that there are things we're wrong about, there are ways we could have handled different things differently.

0:32:52 Benn: So I think, when it comes to relationships, and even at work, if I am a manager of somebody, or if somebody's managing me. Or, "Heck, I just went to a Nebraska football game today." So if you've got a leader who's willing to take ownership of their own mistakes, and apologize for them, I think it provides a connection, and it provides a trust, and a mutual respect between two people. So...

0:33:13 John: I think so too.

0:33:14 Benn: On that level, I would say it's important for relationships. And that's a human thing. It's not an alcoholic thing.

0:33:21 John: Right, I agree with that. And I will say, for me, too, the one benefit I got from AA... And maybe I would have got it somewhere else, but... Was learning to admit when I'm wrong. And that is such a huge thing. And this is more in Step 10. But I do that on a regular basis. When I'm wrong, I will tell somebody flat out, "I was wrong for doing this. And I'm sorry, or whatever." And

I am pretty quick about it. Nowadays, it's almost an automatic thing. But it was not always like that, I was never like that. And there's a lot of people that aren't. Some people almost see it as a weakness, I think, to ever admit when they're wrong. But it really isn't. It's a good way of showing that you are in touch with yourself, that you're honest, that you're secure, [chuckle] you're human. And for me, it happens often in the work place. I work as a manager, and I sometimes have to go to my employees, and I say, "Gosh, I was wrong, the way I talked to you," or, "I was wrong the..." And I don't know, I have to do that, because these are people I have relationships with, and I've got to be comfortable with them. And this is what I've learned to do, I guess.

0:34:42 Benn: Yeah. Well, and I think, it's hard to learn anything if you don't think you can ever be wrong. It's part of that humility. I remember, when I was still working as a counselor, I got thrown into having to do this group at the last second. So, I was so unprepared and I was just pulling crap out of the back of my head. And we did a "getting to know you" exercise with all the clients, and one of my questions to them was to see how well they knew each other was, which? Who? And I don't know why I said this, it was totally stupid, but it was like, "Who is your favorite tech here?" At the place I worked at. And so, then, all of a sudden, after that group, then all the clients were telling the techs like, "Well I said, you were my favorite." And then so-and-so said, "You were their favorite." And then it's like, "Oh, crap." I knew I screwed up right when I did it.

0:35:32 Benn: So I ended up writing an email to all the tech staff at our place. And I explained the situation, explained how stupid it was for me to do it. And everybody, all the tech staff was mad, before they knew what had happened. And after I made this amend, an apology, everybody came up to me, and they're like, "Oh, everything you said about us was so nice, and it was so great." And I was the one who fucked it up and caused them so much grief the day before but then when I realized it and it'd become an issue, after I made that apology, I had a different level of connection with the tech staff there.

0:36:08 Benn: That's good.

0:36:09 John: That showed that I understood what their job was about and how it was wrong what happened. But they also understood where I was coming from, and how it was that it came about that, that even came up but...

0:36:21 John: So we get a lot of people that write... Not a lot of people, but we get frequently people that write to us on the podcast who like these podcasts about the steps because they've never ever heard anybody approach them from a secular perspective. And even though these steps and wording are pretty secular as they're written, when you read them in the Big Book especially it's totally religious experience. But if you were to give someone advice or share your experience however you want to put it about the step, how would you council a newcomer in AA today Benn, about working these steps?

0:37:00 Benn: I was gonna say too, I don't know that the list always comes from step four. I'll say that because if we're looking at our resentments, just because we have an resentment doesn't mean we owe someone an apology. And there's a part of the book too that made it sound like, just because we had ill-feelings to someone it said maybe we should say that to them. I'm like, "I don't know..." It said, "We confess our former ill-feeling and express our regret." Well, what if it was just a feeling, what if you didn't act on it. I don't know that it's a... "I always hated you back in the day, I just want to let you know, I'm sorry that I hated you." [chuckle] No, that's not something that needs stated. I would say I think it's important to make a list out. Well, I don't even know if that's true. I

think it's important to have some function of taking a look at this. And a lot of it is gonna come from those things that are repeatedly playing in our head that like you said, that we know deep down something's eating at us. And we need to take a look at it and I think it's good to talk with somebody about that.

0:37:57 Benn: And I don't even know if that's always another AA member that's good to talk about. If you have a therapist, maybe you talk to them about the benefits and the down fall of making that amend or not. And like you said, if you have a financial amend that is eating at you, I think you need to do something about it for sure. But I would stress what I was talking about too, the connection that you can have with another person when you're admitting your faults, and how important making an amends can be on that level. And just also stress that it's going forward, it's a good way to live. Like we're talking about.

0:38:31 John: Yeah, I would too. The way I would put it... For somebody. First of all when you're very first getting sober in the first few months, I would not worry too much about amends at this point, unless there's something that you really need to take care of because you're just gonna get drunk about it, talk to somebody in AA, and then maybe go ahead and do that. But what I like about the 12 and 12 in Step Eight, is it's almost really contemplative where you think back over all your personal relationships that you've had in your life and you think back about how you treated people and the things that you've done and how that has affected your relationship. And I think that that is almost as valuable as actually making the amend is understanding the subtle things that we did that hurt people. The little things, not necessarily stealing money from them but maybe we weren't listening to them, maybe we weren't present for them, maybe we were cold and distant, maybe we had bad tempers, whatever.

0:39:50 John: But having that awareness is a big huge deal. But then once you have that awareness and you know all these people in your life that you affected, then I think you have to be very, very careful and I think oftentimes the best approach is to change your behavior and overtime, especially with family members, you might be able to make amends but in a way that is comfortable for everybody. But I guess it's really a case-by-case basis, everybody's different. It's really your personality. My personality, I'm just not the type of person, I'm not gonna sit someone down and say... With the list of things that I did to them.

0:40:32 Benn: On some level it seems ego-centric and self-centered to do it that way. Like, "Oh, well let's have this big grandiose production about me and how awful I am."

0:40:41 John: Yeah, and the poor person sitting there and like you said, a lot of times these people don't even... They don't wanna hear it. They don't care. They forgot about it. So don't torture them by going to other stuff. You really want... It should be more like a conversation where you have some sort of a sense that they want to hear it or it's something that would be beneficial for both of you to say it as a way to mend the relationship. But yeah, it's tricky stuff.

0:41:11 Benn: It talked about letting people know, explaining AA to the person and let them know exactly what you're doing and I thought to myself like, "Why the hell is that even important?" It's just like... Can it be a little more human than that.

0:41:24 John: Yeah, I agree. That's funny. I actually did that with my old boss, which was weird 'cause I actually... At that time, I was very fundamental with my Big Book and I'd tried to do things exactly. I read the damn thing, I said, "Okay check, check, check." That's what I'm gonna do. So I

did that, it was silly. Nowadays, I don't think I would do that. I won't even... Well, with my boss, it had to do with my drinking so I did talk about my drinking and I said, "Hey." Because he came to me and he says, "You got a problem drinking. Please get help." I said, "Oh no, I don't have a problem." So that was... I had to tell him, "Yes, I did have a problem." So that was directly with my drinking. But other amends had more to do with my behavior. And I wouldn't even bring up the drinking. Drinking might have had something to do with it but that was just... That's almost an excuse too. You can say, "Yeah, I was a drunk and an alcoholic that's why I was such a jerk." Well, no, I wouldn't even say that. I would just say, "You know what, I was a jerk I did this, I did A, B, C." And just leave out the whole thing that, "Yeah, I did it because I was an alcoholic and now I'm trying to have a spiritual experience so I can stay sober and that's why I'm telling you this." That cheapens it I think.

0:42:35 Benn: I agree when I tell guys when I'm talking with them and they're talking to me about making an amend I tell them, "You don't mention the word alcohol." It's what I wouldn't do. Again, I'm not ordering 'em around but if alcohol comes up and it's just your first couple of lines of your apology, I'm like, "People don't wanna hear that. They don't give a shit if you're drinking or not. It's about your behavior."

0:42:54 John: That's right. Exactly.

0:42:56 Benn: 'Cause there's plenty of people that get drunk and don't do that crap to each other.

0:43:00 John: Exactly. And sometimes I had this with me personally when I was first getting sober. I'm talking maybe the first year or two maybe even. I assumed that all of my problems, that all of my bad behaviors were really connected to my drinking. Not necessarily so though. I found out later. And I think that if I had that impression that there might be other new comers also that might have that impression that it was just my drinking that made me this way. So that if I just stopped drinking I'm gonna be okay and my drinking explains everything. So therefore I'm gonna go to all my friends and family and say, "Yeah, I was a drunk and that's why I was doing all those terrible things. But, I'm not a drunk anymore so I'm not gonna do this terrible things." Well, guess what? That's not the case. You might still start doing things. [chuckle]

0:43:51 Benn: Right. Which I mean when I'm translating our book that's why they call it a spiritual thing because it involves more than not drinking. I don't call that spiritual but it's like you're saying there's way more to it than just not drinking. It exacerbates the things that are going on underneath. I'm sure there are some things that are there specifically because of drinking but I don't know I'm like a... I like the saying that, a drunk man's words are sober mans thoughts 'cause that was definitely true for me. I knew that what I said came out because of alcohol but I knew I said it because of how I felt.

0:44:26 John: Interesting.

0:44:26 Benn: Alcohol just allowed it to come out. That's my belief at least I don't know how you feel about that.

0:44:31 John: No, I think that's true. I think that's true. It's been a while since my drinking and I was in a different place in my life at that time. Different time of life. I was just starting out in life. So things were different and I didn't really have the complex relationships. I was single and things were a little bit more simple for me then. So my amends were not that heavy really. That's why I

didn't really interact with a whole lot of people. It'd be different now I guess if I were a 50 year old and I had family and kids and people that I'd really done some serious emotional harm to. That's really difficult. And we do do some serious harm. That's something I've seen as a sober alcoholic. I've been able to observe the harm that alcoholics do to their families through my own family. My wife's sister and her brother-in-law, my brother-in-law had really, really bad drinking problems and I watched what...

0:45:47 John: And my brother-in-law died from it. But anyway I watched them put their family through hell. And these, the two that had the drinking problems were totally oblivious to what they were doing to their families. Totally had no... Totally. It was really interesting for me to see just the pain that the families were going through that these alcoholics were putting them through. Understanding that I did that to my father. My father saw me acting out and going through all that crap and it was worrying him to hell. I was totally oblivious to the pain that he was going through. The best way that I could have made amends for that was stop drinking and stop putting him through that kind of pain. That's what I ultimately did. And that would have been the best amends for my wife's sister too. Would be, "Don't drink, stop causing pain to your family."

0:46:39 Benn: Right. Well, if we're to buy-in into the disease concept it's interesting that we get blamed. This is all about taking ownership. But if we're really a chronic drunk and we're gonna call this a disease. It's what happens. It's not this person is willfully running roughshod through somebody's life and intentionally trying to trash everybody else's life around them. It's what happens when you become chronically addicted to alcohol. Now again I think it's important to take ownership of that after we get sober and realize that it's maybe I'm contradicting what I said earlier. But it's exacerbated parts of our own normal nature probably. But it's so difficult. Because that's where I get behind the disease concept because you see people that are just nothing like their former selves that you would never imagine would happen, and their families look at them and they're like, "What in the hell is wrong with you?"

0:47:35 Benn: And yeah that's the disease of alcoholism. It's crazy and there's that window of opportunity in there where you get... I don't know, I feel fortunate enough to have taken... Done what I've done to get better before it got to that super chronic place. Because sometimes you go past that level and you ruin your life so much that it gets hard to see why you would turn back around and do something different. I mean, that's how screwed up our brains get.

0:48:04 John: No, it's true. It's true. And the disease progresses physically, so bad that ultimately it does kill us and our minds get so twisted. That's the thing too about alcoholism. I can see the... It is a mental illness. Because I have a brother who's mentally ill and he can't help himself because he doesn't have the right mind to understand that he's ill and that he doesn't have the soundness of mind to do the things to make himself well. Well, that's the same thing for an alcoholic who's drinking. Our minds are so messed up, we don't even understand how messed up we are. We don't even know what to do. We don't even know that we need help. We won't even admit that we need help. That's how sick we are. So then when we stop drinking, it's not we automatically are restored, that we're all whole again. So that's why I think we have to be so careful in those early days of sobriety to understand that we've just been through a really traumatic experience as an active alcoholic, we put our family through a lot of hell. Maybe we should be real careful before we start approaching them about our actions when we are drinking because we might not even quite understand yet ourselves.

0:49:22 Benn: Yeah, for sure. If you don't have that knowledge about yourself, don't go about being a blow-hard in making those amends like that. And this is where I can get to be a

fundamentalist almost about AA because when our brain is that addicted, chronically addicted, we need to lean on something outside ourselves. I can be like, "Yeah, go to AA, do what they say to do, this and that." Then it also, it ignites my passion for what we tend to talk about with this whole WAAFT movement or whatever heck you want to call it. That meetings need, in my opinion, meetings need to be as welcoming as they can be. Everybody has got their right to have their dogmatic views. But I think it just needs to be a welcoming place that's free from dogma, where people feel welcomed, where they can go and spend time while we're sorting all this stuff out. I know there's more to AA than that. But if that's all it is, that's great. It buys us that time to sort things out and that's where I think people get scared away from AA. People who otherwise would want to be sober, hear some of this rigidity and this all or nothing thinking. It's like, "Either do this or you're gonna die or whatever. And don't procrastinate, you better get started. You come in here and you work your steps." And if you're just clearing the cobwebs out, its like, "What the hell?"

0:50:42 John: And also, what I would say too would be... What I would like to see AA do, and maybe... And we actually do this in our agnostic being because we don't use the damn Big Book. Big Book is useless to us. Great. Because it's... I don't know what to say about the Big Book. It's an okay book, but it's not something that I would want to use to recover on, in the 21st century. It's not what I would want to use to have a conversation with, with my friends now in the 21st century. It's really weird if you go to an AA meeting where you're studying the Big Book and reading this language on step nine 'cause that's not the way that we even deal with people nowadays. It would be much better if people at a meeting could have a conversation like you and I are having right now where it's real life experience. What we actually have done and experienced and not necessarily through the words of having a spiritual awakening, all that kind of stuff.

0:51:40 Benn: Yeah.

0:51:41 John: But speaking of the Big Book, there is something I want to talk about because it's always bugged me. The promises are in the Big Book. And here's what bug me, [chuckle] about the promises. When I first read them I thought, "Oh, that's really cool," yeah, I could even... And I thought, "Yeah, this is great. I recognized that these things have happened in my life." And I think that's super. It's wonderful. It's good. Whatever. Great. But I didn't put a whole lot more into it than that. I thought, "Okay, great. Yeah, these things have happened to me. That shows that I'm recovering, that I've probably been doing the steps the way I should be doing them," whatever. But that was it. Well, for some reason, I don't know when it started happening, but more and more people started making a really big deal about those damn promises and they started reading them at meetings. Some groups would actually read the damn promises to open their meetings. Have you ever been in meetings where they do that?

0:52:35 Benn: I have, but I've been to ones too where they will close with it.

0:52:39 John: Yeah, reading the damn promises. And they read them like they're some solemn thing. And I guess what bugs me about it in a way Benn, it's like, "No, no, that's not what it's about." We don't do the steps so that we get those promises, those promises are just a by-product of what we do to stay sober. We do this to not drink.

0:53:03 Benn: This starts to become a sales pitch.

0:53:04 John: Yeah, it's crazy. And it focuses too much on... They turn it into a religious thing too. And unfortunately, the only part, when you do the promises, if you left out the last sentence about

God, that it would all be wonderful. But of course it puts the God in there, so people read it... They read it as a closing thing in their meeting or whatever, like it's some holy... Well, anyway, that's my resentment about it. I shouldn't go off on it. But I notice this happening, I don't know, maybe 10, 12, 15 years ago, maybe I started seeing it creeping in. But early on in my AA experience, it was just another part of the book, nobody gave a damn about it. It's like you read it once or whatever, but goddamn, all people start latching onto it. It drives me crazy.

0:53:51 Benn: Well, it's like a carrot to hold out in front of people I think. I'm gonna provide a commentary on it as I read through it. [chuckle] If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are halfway through. So that's halfway through the ninth step, right?

0:54:05 John: Right, right.

0:54:06 Benn: Okay, so I don't know about amazed, but I can understand how if you make a few amends and you feel pretty good, "Yeah, it's okay. This is cool." "We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness." Well, I can agree with that, for sure. About not drinking. I feel much freer. [chuckle] "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it." Okay, I can agree with that too. There's something about some peace being made with our past, and it's just a part of our experience that we can carry forward. "We will comprehend the word serenity and will know peace." Okay, well kind of. Sure. But then it starts getting a little grandiose. "No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others." Well that's the whole idea behind AA on some level, great.

0:54:51 Benn: "That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear." Okay, now that's getting a little grandiose for me, it sounds magical. 'Cause still once in a while, I'll have a little self-pity, doesn't mean I'm necessarily doing something wrong. "We will lose interests in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows." Okay, I can understand what they're saying there too. "Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change." Agree with that. "Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us." There's always some asshole in the meeting going on about, "It doesn't say economic insecurity will leave you, it says your fear of economic will leave you." [laughter] It's like, how dare we not completely agree with the book. "We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us." Well, not all the time, but I'd sure as heck know how to handle situations a little better than I used to. And then, like you said, it all goes to shit. [laughter] "We suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." Okay. Now since I don't believe in God I think that's bullshit, but even if more than that, it's like, "Don't you dare give yourself credit."

0:55:54 John: Right. "All these great things have happened because God did it for you."

0:55:58 Benn: Yes. And I had a friend of mine who is an atheist and her sponsor was not an atheist but she was a total newbie. I don't know why this person chose this person. She'd been around longer than this other woman but yet she chose her for her sponsor. And she knew she didn't believe in God, and this woman was just talking to her about how things had been going better and just out of nowhere she says, "God is doing for you what you couldn't do for yourself." And it's just like, "Fuck you." I mean, okay. So, I'm getting a little pissed about it, but the point is I think we've gotta put the... At some point, I've said this on our podcasts before, you have to realize that what you're doing differently is what's resulting in different results. It's not just that all of a sudden you aligned yourself with God and now He's going to grace you with some things. Now can I agree like you

said, with most of those promises? Well yes, on a subtle level I can. But yeah, it starts to become that carrot that they hold out in front of you...

0:56:52 John: Yeah, don't make too big of a deal out of it. That's what bugs me.

0:56:55 Benn: "Have you experienced the promises yet?" "Yeah, I've experienced the promises. Have you? God has removed my desire to drink. Did He chose to do that for you?"

0:57:04 John: Maybe someone will tell me who started making a big deal out of it all of a sudden. Because it used to not be, I swear. I know my first... Well, not my first, several years in AA people weren't quoting and pontificating about the goddamn promises like they've been doing the last couple of decades or whatever. [chuckle]

0:57:22 Benn: It's like this secret code, like, "I've been this far in the program and received this. Have you?" It's a way to keep people striving, which I suppose is a good thing.

0:57:31 John: Yeah. And then they're always quick to point out, "You don't get these until you're halfway through Step Nine. So don't be thinking that you're feeling good now, because you don't get this until that." Or whatever, whatever.

0:57:43 Benn: "Don't you don't dare feel good before now. You gotta hate yourself until you're halfway through the ninth step."

0:57:48 John: So that's just one little resentment I guess I have about the promises. But I've had that for a long time. At my old home group they went through a phase where people kept reading those damn things all the time. I think somebody actually framed them and hung them on the damn wall or something too. I was like, "Oh man." I don't know, that kind of stuff just bugged me.

0:58:12 Benn: It's anything they can worship at any given time that seems new or whatever. I had an experience I wanted to say, too, to this week. The more I get involved... I know lots of people in AA around here, but the more I talk to people the more I'm amazed at the shit I hear. I talked to another woman who's new in the program again but she's been in the rooms two or three times before and she was talking about one of her sponsors before. And her sponsor was helping her the first time around wean off of her psych meds because that's not really AA to be on psych meds. And I've heard that before from other people but again with what I've been thinking about lately it's just like, "That is just fucking wrong." And this woman, who was her sponsor, now this is not against anybody who works in food services, but she works in food services. She's not a mental health technician, she's not anything. But she had this elaborate plan for her to titrate off her medication. It's just like, "Oh my God." Infuriating.

0:59:11 John: Well, that's too... Now was that person her sponsor or was that just some person?

0:59:16 Benn: No, that person was her sponsor the first time she came in to AA.

0:59:19 John: See that's what scares me about this whole sponsorship thing. We're actually having some articles on AA Beyond Belief tomorrow, about sponsorship. Which are actually good articles about people who had good experiences with sponsorship. And I guess maybe that's the overall experience in AA that it's been mostly positive. But I hear some of these stories, like the one you just described, it gives me a bad feeling about sponsorship. I have to tell you, don't know.

0:59:43 Benn: I went to one of the dogmatic meetings I used to go to once in a while 'cause a friend was having a birthday. And it was about tradition eight, which I think says we don't basically get paid to do 12 step work. And it ended up being, part of it was bashing of anybody who ends up going into counselling, so I took that personally. But then, there's another person that I went to school with and he stuck up for it and said, "Just counselling is not necessarily 12-step work." It's the arrogance of AA. And if I would've spoke, I would have quoted Bill Wilson talking about how we shouldn't think we have a monopoly on recovery and we shouldn't think that AA is the only way to get sober. Now, I don't know that Bill necessarily believed that but I think his point is we shouldn't carry ourselves with this attitude that we have the answer for everyone. Counselling is not 12-step work, necessarily. There's a lot more to it. But there's something about if you go into counselling and you've been somebody in 12-step, it's like you're selling out or you're getting paid to do 12-step work. It's not the same shit.

1:00:46 John: No.

1:00:47 Benn: And if you're a counselor, you're teaching people how to do other things other than 12-step stuff. My point is, this guy I knew, he said his old sponsor who's a very rigid person, said, "Well, just be careful going into counselling. You'll all get well and then, all of a sudden, you're not going to AA meetings anymore and the next thing you know, you're drunk." And it's like, "Yeah." It's... I don't know.

1:01:09 John: Well, what we have to remember in AA, we're lay people. I'm not trained to be a counselor or anything like that. I'm a lay person. I'm not even an expert on alcoholism. I'm an expert on my own drinking. That's it. And I think that people in AA should always remember that. All AA members, that's all we are, is lay people. We're not professionals. So, there's a different category of people like you, who actually got on and got training and education. That's a whole different thing. You could probably actually help people and still be a functioning alcoholic [chuckle] and still be a trained counselor and help people, probably, because you've got the training and education to do it.

1:01:44 Benn: I've seen that happen before but...

1:01:46 John: Yeah.

1:01:47 Benn: Yeah. There's those people who think they know everything about everything there is to know about alcoholism just because they really know that 164.

1:01:56 John: Well, this conversation went by pretty quick. It's amazing.

1:02:00 Benn: It did. Yeah, it did.

1:02:01 John: I was afraid about these steps because I didn't really feel like I had a lot of really heavy experience with them. But the more I thought about that, I thought, "Yeah. I'm okay with this." I'm glad I didn't do them as it's outlined in the Big Book because I think that would've been a little bit silly.

1:02:18 Benn: Well, but I think you did though, too, because if you go through it, it's vague. In some levels, it's very specific and tries to scare you into doing it but then other times, it's like, "Well, you need to really think about this and think about that." So, there's a lot of room for doing

this different ways, and I can't stand it when I'm in the room and people make it sound like there's a perfect way to do any of this stuff.

1:02:40 John: So, we're coming up. We'll be finishing with these steps here in a couple of months. We're gonna have to find something else to talk about on our podcast, besides these steps. That'll be nice, probably. It'll be refreshing to start talking about other things. There's a lot of topics we can talk about.

1:02:53 Benn: Oh, yeah. I got some ideas. Singleness of purpose...

1:02:56 John: That's a big one.

1:02:57 Benn: All the other things that really frustrate me.

1:03:00 John: Yeah. The singleness of purpose thing is driving me crazy, too. That's one of these trends in AA, like the promises was a trend. Now, the most recent trend is singleness of purpose.

1:03:11 Benn: Yeah. To me, it's such a non-issue. It's one of those things that's a non-issue.

1:03:16 John: Yeah, it is. It's crazy. It's crazy.

[music]

1:03:18 John: Alright, Benn. Well, it was fun.

1:03:20 Benn: Yeah.

1:03:21 John: You have a good rest of the weekend.

1:03:23 Benn: Yeah. You too, John. I always enjoy this. Thanks so much.

1:03:25 John: Alright. Take care.

1:03:26 Benn: Alright. You, too.

1:03:29 John: Well, that's it for another episode of AA Beyond Belief, the podcast. We'll be back next week speaking with Ed W from Brooklyn, New York. Ed will share his story with us but also talk about why he thinks, agnostic AA should be called going forward. That'll be a good one. Until then, you all take care and be well.

[music]