

**“THE PROMISES OF OUR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING—ONE STEP AT A TIME!”**

**A “THREADS OF RECOVERY” BIG BOOK STUDY for 2022.**

(All page cites from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

***We discover how THE PROMISE, “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ...” is a combination and fulfillment of all the other promises in each Step.***

My spiritual awakening is vital if I am to live a healthy, helpful life, full of meaning and purpose. As I “work”, or “am worked by”, each of the Twelve Steps, I am changed from a person with “a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body” into a person who has on-going “spiritual experiences” resulting in my continuous “spiritual awakening”. My spiritual awakening is “the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism”, my emotional sobriety. My spiritual awakening is the “promise of all promises” in my life today.

***“Are these extravagant promises? ... They will always materialize if we work for them.”***

Conditional promises are based on the principle that people are motivated by hope. The hopeful promises in AA are, first of all, conditioned on me stopping doing the wrong thing, the harmful thing. Then, I can learn to do the right thing, the healthy and helpful thing.

“[The book up to this point] ... make[s] clear three pertinent ideas: p. 60

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives. (Stop doing)

(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (Stop doing)

(c) That God could and would if He were sought.” (Start doing)

*To receive the Promise of my Spiritual Awakening, I admit my need for it (Step One); desire it (Step Two); decide to seek it (Step Three); see what is blocking me from receiving it (Step Four).*

**“WE ARE DELIGHTED”, Part 1. “Uncovering what is Blocking the Promise”—Step Four.**

“God, I offer myself to Thee ... Relieve me of the bondage of self.” (Step 3) p. 63

“Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom.” (Step Four +) p. 64

“Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path.” (Step Five +) p. 72

“Once we have taken this step [Five], withholding nothing, **we are delighted.**” p. 75

*Step Four begins my work, with the help of God and my sponsor, to gain my relief from the bondage of myself. This work continues through Step Twelve. Step Four is the first part of an on-going process of setting aside the parts of me that are blocking me from the help I need from the God of my understanding.*

*Step Four begins to uncover what is blocking me from my spiritual awakening.*

“**Resentment** is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.” p. 64

“**[Fear]** was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it.” p. 67

“We all have **sex [inconsideration]** problems. We’d hardly be human if we didn’t.” p. 69

*I am willing to undertake a “strenuous effort” to write these three inventories as a means to uncover what in me is blocking me from my spiritual awakening.*

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**“Uncovering what is Blocking the Promise (of my Spiritual Awakening)”’: Step Four.**

**Resentments:** “To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got.” (p. 66)  
“... this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal.  
For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight  
of the Spirit.” “

The “four-column” personal inventory format in the Big Book is an effective way to do honest self-examination. The questions are in separate columns; thus, so are my answers!

The Resentment Inventory begins with three columns, p. 65; Column Four is on p. 67.

The inventory begins with “them” and what “they” did to me ... as I see it and feel it. It continues with how I am “affected”. My answers move from “them” to “me”.

The key to healthy self-examination is introduced on p. 66. “To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got ... the more we fought and tried to have our own way, the worse matters got.” I.e., I’ve been doing p. 65 for years! (Review pp. 61-62)

To stop shutting myself off “from the sunlight of the Spirit”, I then admit “that the world and its people really dominated” me, and that I “could not wish [resentments] away any more than alcohol”. (p. 66) In other words, I am powerless over my own resentments!

*I discover the answer to my resentments: “We asked God to help us show them ... tolerance, pity, and patience ... how can I be helpful to [them] ... God save me from being angry ... we avoid retaliation or argument ... take a kindly and tolerant view of each and everyone.” I begin to learn to forgive—for my benefit! (p. 67)*

This leads me to Column Four on p. 67. As I become willing, with God’s help, to put “out of [my] mind the wrongs others had done”, I can then “resolutely look for [my] own mistakes”. Column Four is to answer the questions:

“Where had [I] been selfish, dis-honest, self-seeking and frightened?”

“Where was [I] to blame?”

What were “[my] faults”?

*My answers in Column Four begin to “un-block” me from the “sunlight of the Spirit”!*

**Fears:** “We asked ourselves why we had [fears]. Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough.” (p. 68)

I use the same process as I did in my Resentment Inventory to honestly answer the fear questions on p. 68:

Who am I afraid of? What am I afraid of? What does my fear feel like?

What part, if any, do I play in my fear?

*I further “un-block” myself from the “sunlight of the Spirit” when I admit that self-reliance didn’t go far enough”; I am better off to “trust infinite God rather than [my] finite self”.*

*I ask God “to remove [my] fear and direct [my] attention to what He would have me be”.*

**Sexual Conduct (Inconsideration of Others):** “We reviewed our own conduct over the years past.” (p. 69)

I use the same process to honestly answer the sexual conduct questions on p. 69. I continue to “un-block” myself from the “sunlight of the Spirit” when I admit:

“Where (with whom) have [I] have been “selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?”

“Whom had [I] hurt?”

“Did I unjustifiably arouse jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness?”

“Where was [I] at fault?”

*“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.” “*

*“I didn’t work the Twelve Steps to quit drinking. I quit drinking to work the Twelve Steps.”*

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**Reflecting on the Prayers in Step Four: Examples of God’s Power, Love and Way of Life.**

“Relieve me of the bondage of self ... Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of Life.” p. 63

Using the prayers in Step Four, I begin to “bear witness” to “God’s Power”. I begin to experience “God’s Love”. I start following God’s “Way of Life”. (see Step Three Prayer, p. 63)

Writing Step Four begins relieving me of my “bondage of self” with changes such as:

Stop blaming others for all my troubles.	Resentment Inventory.
Stop using only self-reliance to keep from being afraid.	Fear Inventory.
Stop being inconsiderate of others.	Sexual Conduct Inventory.

*The following prayers help me admit and begin to let go of my **resentments**:*

“We asked God to help us show them (the people who wronged us) the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend.” (p. 67)

“When a person offended, we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.’ ” “

“God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.” “

*The following prayers help me admit and begin to let go of my **fears**:*

“We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves.” (p. 68)

“Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity.” “

“We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us **be**.” “

*The following prayers help me admit and begin to become less **inconsiderate**:*

“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.” (p. 69)

“In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter.” “

“... we let God be the final judge.” (p. 70)

“... have the honest desire to let God take us to better things ...” “

“We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for strength to do the right thing.” “

**“We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him ... already made a decision ... an inventory ... a good beginning.” (p. 71)**

**Next Time: “Discovering that I am Blocking the Promise!”—Step Five.**

# MIKE MCKILLOP—A MEMORY

Mike McKillop was my friend.

More importantly, Mike McKillop was OUR friend!

He loved us as we are.

He tolerated us where we are.

He encouraged us to be better than we are.

He set an example for all of us in his dedication to the newcomer.

Mike shared his experience, strength and hope unsparingly to ensure that our message of hope, our message of recovery from alcoholism, our message of the promise of our Spiritual Awakening, was always available to any and all who came seeking.

For me to say Mike will be missed is an understatement.

Mike's passing to be in the "big meeting in the sky" is a blessing to the eternal souls in that meeting.

Yet, his passing leaves a hole in my heart and a sadness in my soul.

Mike has done his service.

He has given back to us, and for us, in full measure.

He has favored us with far more than we can even imagine today.

Mike has woven for us in Threads of Recovery a tapestry of recovery for us to continue.

Mike's time with us in body has come to an end.

Mike's time with us in spirit will never end.

Our service in his memory need never end.

Our service by his example will never end.

Thank you, Mike McKillop, for helping us all be better than we were.

We miss you, Mike.

We love you, Mike.

