

## HOW THE TWELVE STEPS REMOVE “BARRIERS” FROM OUR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

### A “Threads of Recovery” Big Book Workshop: July 4 through September 26, 2022

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

#### Step Two: DOUBT, Part One.

“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” (p. 59)

“We hope we have made clear the distinction between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic. If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.” (Same three conclusions in “a,b,c’s”, p. 60) (p. 44)

With Step One, the barriers of my **denial** of my powerlessness and my **defiance** of my unmanageability are set aside so that I can begin to see my need for help. I admit that my own power is insufficient to overcome the “insidious insanity of that first drink” (p. 8). I am powerless over my physical allergy triggered by that first drink. “Our human resources, as marshalled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly.” (p. 45)

“When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to stop doubting the power of God.” (p. 52)

My journey from **doubting** to believing required more than the single leap of faith from p. 45 to p. 52. I was an “agnostic”. I believed nothing can be known of the existence or the nature of God beyond material phenomena. I claimed neither faith nor disbelief.

Most alcoholics’ spiritual awakening is of the educational variety, not a sudden, overnight spiritual experience. Alcoholics Anonymous, and especially “We Agnostics”, guides me in small steps to “come to believe that a Power greater than [myself] could restore me to sanity.” I learn that my **doubts** that are barriers to my spiritual awakening can be set aside by different choices. *I learn to set aside **doubt**, one new choice at a time.*

“... could restore us to sanity.”

***Doubt** that I need to be restored to sanity is a barrier to my spiritual awakening.*

I choose to stop **doubting** that I need help to not act on the “plain insanity” (p. 37) of the first drink, thus beginning my spiritual journey to “restore [me] to sanity”:

“... they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” (p. xxviii)

(False: Drink won’t hurt me. True: Drink will ruin my life.)

“... lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.” (p. 21)

“... the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind ...” (p. 23)

“We are without defense against the first drink.” (p. 24)

“... real alcoholics are not going to believe they are in that class. (**Denial**) By every form of self-deception and experimentation, they will try to prove themselves exceptions to the rule, therefore nonalcoholic.” (**Defiance**) (p. 31)

“If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion (**doubt**) that someday we will be immune to alcohol.” (p. 33)

“The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few rare cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)

***Doubt** is not replaced with certainty. My **doubt** diminishes as I make better-informed choices.*

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**“Came to believe ...”**

***Doubt that I need spiritual help to think “sanely” is a barrier to my spiritual awakening.***

I choose to stop **doubting** my need for spiritual help by admitting my desperation:

“He had come to pass his experience along to me—if I cared to have it. (pp. 9-10)

“... an alcoholic mentality ... was a hopeless condition.” (p. 42)

“To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.” (p. 44)

“Faced with alcoholic destruction ... open-minded on spiritual matters ...” (p. 48)

“In the face of collapse and despair ... they found that a new power ...” (p. 50)

“Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady ... talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a solution.” (p. 92)

“... then would come oblivion and the awful awakening to face the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.” (p. 151)

*“I have a feeling that if I ever find myself in Heaven, it will be from backing away from Hell.”*

(Father Ed Dowling, Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 256)

**“... that a Power greater than ourselves could...”**

***Doubt that there is a Power greater than me is a barrier to my spiritual awakening.***

“We Agnostics” helps me set aside my **doubts** about God by beginning with my simple choice that there is a Power—that is not me—that is greater than me:

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves*. Obviously.” (p. 45)

“Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (pp. 62, 64) “

“We know how he feels. We have shared his honest **doubt** and prejudice.” (p. 45)

“... willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ... impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.” (p. 46)

“Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?” (p. 47)

“God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be.” (p. 53)

“*Who are you to say there is no God?*” (p. xxxi, p. 56, p. 215)

*My choice to stop **doubting** there is a Power greater than me begins my restoration to sanity.*

***Doubt that a Power greater than me could “restore” me is a barrier to my spiritual awakening.***

To know that my faith is weak is the first step toward its strengthening. “We Agnostics” uses examples of others to help me set aside my **doubts** and choose God’s power to restore me to sane thinking and emotional maturity:

“... suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.” (p. 44)

“We found that God does not make too hard terms with those who seek Him.” (p. 46)

“... these men and women are strikingly agreed ... access to, and believes in a Power greater than himself ... each case accomplished the miraculous ...” (p. 50)

“When we saw others solve their problems by a simple reliance upon the Spirit of the Universe, we had to **stop doubting** the power of God.” (p. 52)

“... a spiritual liberation ... people who rose above their problems ... God made these things possible ...” (*limitation ... opportunity ... liberation*) (p. 55)

*Fitz M.’s story inspires my choice to stop **doubting** God’s power to “restore” me.* (pp. 213-215)

***Next Time: Step Three and the Barrier to our Spiritual Awakening of UNCERTAINTY.***