

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 Five: PRIDE, Part One.

“Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

“Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.” (underscore mine) (p. 60)

In Alcoholics Anonymous, Step One helps me set aside the barriers to my spiritual awakening of **denial** and **defiance** regarding my illusions and delusions about my powerlessness and my unmanageability. Step Two helps me set aside the barriers to my spiritual awakening of **doubt** that I need spiritual help from a Power greater than me and **doubt** that such help is available to me. My Step Three decision to “offer myself to [God]” helps me set aside more of the barrier to my spiritual awakening of my **uncertainty**.

In my Step Three prayer, I begin to *seek the truth* of God’s help, the solution to my alcoholism. In Step Four, I begin my *response to the truth* of God’s help for my alcoholism:

“... we launched out on a course of vigorous action ... at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us.”(**resentment, fear and inconsideration**). (pp. 63-71)

Now, in Step Five, I face “the things in ourselves which had been blocking us”:

“We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path.” (p. 72)

“We pocket our **pride** and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, we are delighted.” (p. 75)

My pride says to me, “We don’t need help. We can figure this out on our own!” God seems to have created me with a desire to be autonomous, to be independent of any authority other than my own. I want to define “right” and “wrong”, “good” and “bad”, for myself. I want no one, especially God, telling me what to do and what not to do.

When I let this desire for complete independence from any authority, my desire for autonomy, run “free” without any guidance or any limits, AA calls this “self-will run riot”.

In Step Five, I have a *new attitude*—I seek God’s help with the “*obstacles in [my path]*” that block my spiritual awakening. I let God limit my “appetite for complete independence”.

In my spiritual awakening, I move from “God either is or God isn’t” to “I need to quit playing God” to “I have a new Employer” to “I offer myself to God” to “God save me from being angry/take away my fear”/help me mold new ideals—to God help me “pocket my pride”.

*When I “pocket my **pride**” in Step Five, I set aside my “appetite for independence” enough to let God and another person help me review my Step Four self-examination. I admit the problems my **resentments** (anger), **fears** and **inconsiderations** have caused me.*

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PRIDE as a Barrier to my Spiritual Awakening.

“This is perhaps difficult—especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough admitting these things to ourselves.” (p. 72)

“Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk.” (see p. 35) (pp. 72-73)

“... they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock.” (p. 73)

“They only *thought* they had lost their egoism (**pride**) and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else *all* their life story.” “

“More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life ... he wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn’t deserve it.” “

“He trembles to think someone might have observed him.” “

“The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always considerate of others.” (p. 74)

“... we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand.” (p. 75)

“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating event twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” I no longer believe illusions and delusions about my wrongs. (p. 75)

Observations on Step Five.

1. I begin to trust God in Step Three. I begin to trust myself and another person in Step Five. I begin to accept personal accountability when I ask God to help me “pocket my **pride**”.
2. Right “being” comes before right “doing”. I think I am “acting my way into right thinking”, but I am first asking God to “remove our fear and direct our attention to what [God] would have us be”. (p. 68) In Step Five, I am “being” different—I have a new attitude—less **pride**.
3. My **pride** is a liar—telling me “I am enough”; “I did this all on my own”; “I don’t need help”.
4. When I “pocket” enough of my **pride** to do a thoroughly honest Step Five, I am accepting limitation of my “self-will run riot” and receiving liberation from my “bondage of self.”
5. In Step Five, I begin to understand God with my “humble heart”, not just my “**prideful** head”.
6. When I “pocket my **pride**” and “admit the exact nature” of my wrongs in Step Five, I stop letting my self-will high-jack my spiritual awakening.
7. In Step Five, when I “admit ... the exact nature of [my] wrongs, i.e., **resentments, fears** and **inconsideration**, I can understand in Step Six the meaning of my “objectionable things” that grow out of my **resentments, fears** and **inconsideration**.

Next Time: Step Six and the Barrier to our Spiritual Awakening of Denial and Defiance, Part Two.