

## **“HAVING HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING ...!!!”**

A “Big Book” Twelve Step Study of *Spiritual Principles*,  
including the **Prayers** that embody them and the **Promises** that flow from their practice.  
January 2 through March 27, 2023. Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo.  
(All quotes from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise stated.)

### **Introduction.**

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ...” is the first part of Step Twelve. This is the most powerful promise to me in Alcoholics Anonymous.

“The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” (p. 60)

In this “Big Book” study of the Twelve Steps, we consider that the *Spiritual Principles* that produce the *spiritual awakening* for each one of us are the Twelve Steps themselves. In this study, we go beyond the one-word lists of principles for each step. We examine each step in its entirety to find the spiritual principle that is useful for application in our life in recovery, both as a newcomer and as we continue to enlarge our spiritual life each day.

What is a principle? A principle is an unchanging fact. Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level. That is a principle. Water freezing at 32 degrees F. is immutable—unchanging. I do not have to understand the science of thermodynamics and heat transfer to know, believe and apply the principle that water freezes at 32 degrees F.

The principle of water freezing at 32 degrees F. is a principle of a “change process”. Water changes from liquid form to solid form at 32 degrees F.

So, too, are the *spiritual principles* that are the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. They are unchanging principles that form the foundation of our spiritual awakening, our “change process”. Here are two descriptions of our “spiritual awakening change process”:

“... alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences ...  
in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements.”

(Dr. Jung, p. 27)

“The terms ‘spiritual experience’ and ‘spiritual awakening’ are used  
many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the  
personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism  
has manifested itself among us in many different forms.”

(A. A., p. 567)

“We find that no one need have difficulty with the spirituality of the program. *Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable.*” (p. 567) Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are “essential” changes in our “ideas, emotions and attitudes” that grow out of the spiritual principle of each step.

.....  
**Step One.** “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (p. 59)

### **The Spiritual Principle of Step One.**

My spiritual awakening begins when I admit the possibility that I might be powerless over alcohol, though I don’t know it at the time. I begin to let go of my delusion that I’m not powerless over alcohol. I begin to stop lying to myself that my self-will is enough—to stop lying to myself that my life is not unmanageable. (See p. 30 and p. 52)

*The spiritual principle that my self-sufficiency may not be enough to let me live a healthy life has begun to grow in me during my Step One process. My desperation in the face of my insufficient self-reliance finally opens my mind to consider the possibility of spiritual help.*

*My spiritual awakening begins in Step One when I admit—“I can’t do this alone”!*

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### **The Spiritual Principle of Step One (con’t).**

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—

This is the first limitation of my self-will and my self-reliance that I begin to admit in my sobriety and accept in my spiritual recovery. I admit and accept:

that I am powerless over my *physical craving* for more and more alcohol once I take the first drink;

that I am powerless over the *mental obsession* that wants to re-create how good I feel after a few drinks, forgetting the price I pay in the aftermath of “a few drinks”;

that I am powerless over the mental illusion that I can control my drinking;

that I am powerless over the mental delusion that I don’t have a problem with alcohol.

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

“This is the first step in recovery ... the delusion ... has to be smashed.” (p. 30)

—that our lives had become unmanageable.”

When I admit how unmanageable my life has become, it is an even greater limitation to accept than being powerless over alcohol. Note the unmanageable life of the alcoholic:

“How many times people have said to us: ‘I can take it or leave it alone. Why can’t he?’ ‘Why don’t you drink like a gentleman or quit?’ ‘That fellow can’t handle his liquor.’ ‘Why don’t you try beer and wine?’ ‘Lay off the hard stuff.’ ‘His will power must be weak.’ ‘He could stop if he wanted to.’ ‘She’s such a sweet girl, I should think he’d stop for her sake.’ ‘The doctor told him that if he ever drank again it would kill him, but there he is all lit up again.’ “ (p. 20)

“In the face of collapse and despair, in the face of the total failure of their human resources ... confused and baffled by the seeming futility of existence ...” (pp. 50-51)

“We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people—was not a basic solution to these bedevilments ... important ...?” (p. 52)

### **The Prayers of Step One.**

“... and though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (p. xxxii)

“I visited Winchester Cathedral. Much moved ...” (pp. 1, 10, 12)

“What would I not give to make amends.” (p. 8)

“... God personal to me ... my mind snapped shut ...” (p. 10)

“Creative Intelligence, Universal Mind or Spirit ... Czar of the Heavens ...” (p. 12)

“For God’s sake ...” (p. 24)

“I must have this thing.” (p. 29)

“If there is a God ...” (p. 56)

### **The Promises of Step One.**

“He frankly admitted and believed that for him there was no hope.” (p. xxxi)

“... had made his own diagnosis, and deciding the situation hopeless ...” “

“... we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it.” (p. 25)

“... passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid ...” “

“Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became open-minded ...” (p. 48)

***Next Time: The Spiritual Principle of Step Two— “Came to believe that a Power ...”***