

“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 [spiritual] progress.” (p. 60)

In this “Big Book” study, we consider the Twelve Steps themselves to be the *Spiritual Principles* that produce the *spiritual awakening* for each one of us. We go beyond the one-word lists of principles for each step. We discover in each step the *constant spiritual principle* to apply in our life in recovery each day, as we continue to enlarge our spiritual life.

A principle is an unchanging fact. Water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level. Water freezing at 32 degrees F. is an immutable principle—unchanging. I do not have to understand the science of thermodynamics to believe in and apply this principle.

Water freezing at 32 degrees F. at sea level is a principle that is part of a “change process”. Water changes from liquid form to solid form at 32 degrees F. at sea level.

So, too, are the unchanging, *constant spiritual principles* of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Twelve Steps are unchanging, *constant spiritual principles* that form the foundation of our spiritual awakening, our “change process”. *The spiritual principles don’t change. We change.*

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 enable and grow the spiritual principle of each step.

.....

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

(p. 59)

The Spiritual Principle of Step Five.

The spiritual principles of Steps One and Two, ***I can’t do this alone—I am not in charge*** and ***I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone*** lead me to the spiritual principle of Step Three, ***I need to make a decision to seek God’s care***. At once, I use the spiritual principle of Step Four, ***a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself***.

I am “trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with [my] Creator, and to discover the obstacles in [my] path ... to put [my] finger on the weak items in [my] personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on [my] part ...” (p. 72)

My *action* is the spiritual principle of Step Five, ***admit the exact nature of my wrongs***.

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The Spiritual Principle of Step Five: “Admit the exact nature of my wrongs.”

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

Step Five continues the “change process” I asked God to help me with in Step Three, “relieve me of the bondage of self”, and that I began to work on in my Step Four inventories.

Why isn’t writing my Fourth Step and reading my Fourth Step to myself enough?

Why must I share this embarrassing information with God and another person?

“In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient.” (p. 72)

“... tried to keep to themselves certain facts about themselves.” “

“Trying to avoid this humbling experience ...” “

“... never completed their housecleaning.” (p. 73)

“... hung onto some of the worst items in stock.” “

“They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves.” “

“... they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty ...” “

And there is this: “If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking.” (p. 72)

“Almost invariably they got drunk.” (p. 73)

Humility:

“... basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God’s will ...” (12x12, p. 72)

“... humility ... move out from ourselves toward others and toward God.” (12x12, p. 76)

What is it to “admit the exact nature of [my] wrongs”?

I learn to admit, not excuse, my behavior.

I must be as honest as I can about the part I play in my relationships with others, resisting the temptation to rationalize or justify the “wrong” things I have done.

I must be *humble* enough to admit where I have been wrong, regardless of what others have done.

How is “admit the exact nature of my wrongs” an unchanging spiritual principle?

My willingness to admit my “wrong” thoughts, words and deeds changes over time.

The spiritual principle “to admit the exact nature of my wrongs” never changes.

Step Three: “bondage of self”. (p. 63)

Step Four: “flaws in our make-up”: selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened”; “or inconsiderate”. (pp. 64-69)

Step Five: “obstacles in our path”, “weak items”, “**nature** of our defects”. (p. 75)

“... serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct.” (12x12, p. 42)

Motive (Nature of wrong) ...leads to **Choice** ... leads to **Action** ... leads to **Consequence**.

(Selfish, Inconsiderate **Lust**) (Cheat) (Affair) (Get caught)

“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” This is the one-sentence instruction for doing Step Five. (p. 75)

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The Step Five Prayer.

“We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.” (p. 75)

We have been preparing for this “Thank You” prayer to God since early in our recovery, when we stop “running away from God” in Steps One and Two:

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

“There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me as He would.” (p. 13)

“Each individual, in the personal stories, describes in his own language and from his own point of view the way he established his relationship with God.” (p. 29)

“His defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)

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

“... the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives, they present a powerful reason why one should have faith.” (p. 51)

“When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us.” (p. 57)

“But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!” (p. 59)

“He provided what we needed if we kept close to Him and performed His work well ... as we felt new power flow in ...” (p. 63)

“We asked God to help us ... God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.” (p. 67)
(*My first “please help me” prayer ... replacing my power with God’s Power!*)

The Step Five Promises. (p. 75)

“Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted.

We can look the world in the eye.

We can be alone at perfect peace and ease.

Our fears fall from us.

We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator.

We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience.

The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly.

We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.

My willingness, honesty and open-mindedness, as incomplete and imperfect as they are, have enabled me to begin to benefit spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally by allowing the unchanging spiritual principles of Steps One through Five to work in changing me to “begin to have a spiritual experience” (spiritual awakening). (See Appendix II, pp. 567-568)

Next Time: Spiritual Principle of Step Six— “... ask God to help us be willing [to let go].”