

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 Six.** “**Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**” (p. 59)

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

During the first five steps of my spiritual awakening, I have begun to experience the change process in me: “a new attitude” ... “a new relationship with my Creator” ... “the obstacles in my path” ... “the weak items in my personal inventory ... that are about to be cast out.” (p. 72) I have begun to let the spiritual principles of Steps One through Five work in my life: ***I can’t do this alone—I am not in charge; I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone; I need to make a decision to seek God’s care; a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself; admit the exact nature of my wrongs.***

Now my action program continues with more action—prayer action— as I learn to believe in and apply the spiritual principle of Step Six, ***ask God to help me be willing to “let go” of my “objectionable things”.***

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**The Spiritual Principle of Step Six: “Ask God to help me be willing to “let go” of my “objectionable things”.**

“Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (p. 59)

**“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six.”** (p. 76)

Answer what? We look back at p. 75. After completing our Step Five discussion of “Illumination”, we were to return home for an hour and review “the first five proposals”. We were then to answer five questions:

- “if we have omitted anything?” *Lied.*
- “is our work solid so far?” *Honest.*
- “are the stones properly in place?” *Nature of my wrongs.*
- “have we skimmed on the mortar put into the foundation?” *Told partial truth.*
- “have we tried to make mortar without sand?” *Omitted prayer.*

Note: *This review of our work in our first five steps is our one-hour “pause in preparation” for Step Six. Step Six promptly follows Step Five, just as Step Four “at once” follows Step Three.*

**“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.”** (p. 76)

“... with a willingness he had never before been able to muster.” (p. xvi)

“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power ...” (p. 12)

“... a humble willingness to have Him with me—and He came.” “

“... accept spiritual help ... were willing to make the effort ...” (pp. 25-26)

“... even a willingness to believe in a Power ...” (p. 46)

“Circumstances made him willing to believe ...” (p. 57)

“... and are willing to go to any length to get it ...” (p. 58)

“The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.” (p. 60)

“... we must be willing to grow toward it ... willing to make amends ...” (p. 69)

*“Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery.”* (p. 568)

**“Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things we have admitted are objectionable?”** (p. 76)

I learn in my Fourth and Fifth Steps the “exact nature of my wrongs”, my “objectionable things”, that are blocking me from “God’s Power, Love and Way of life”.

These motives, these “unchecked” God-given desires of mine—my “self-will run riot”—are blocking God from meeting my safety, security and social needs. (See AA 12x12, p. 42)

*I am ready for God to remove them from me.*

**“Can He now take them all—every one?”** (p. 76)

The answer is, Yes, God can. God is certainly able! Am I willing to “let go”?

*The question is not “can God?”—but whether I can “let go” so God can!*

**Step Six Prayer.**

**“If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.”** (p. 76)

*I can’t “let go” of my objectionable things on my own, even after I know they harm me.*

**Step Six Promise.**

**God can take them all—every one.**

“We could not wish [resentments] away any more than alcohol.” (p. 66)

*I cannot “wish away” my “objectionable things”. God can help me be willing to “let go”.*

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### **Observations on the Spiritual Principles of Steps One through Six.**

“ ‘This is the Step that separates the men from the boys’ ... try repeatedly Step Six on all his faults—*without any reservations whatever* ...” (12x12, p. 63)

“If you still think you are strong enough to beat the game alone, that is your affair ... feel that you must have some help, we know that we have an answer for you.” (Dr. Bob, p. 181)

“... their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves if they are to re-create their lives.” (Dr. Silkworth, p. xxviii)

*Boys and girls (teenagers) think they know everything and don’t need any help from anybody. Mature adults accept their limitations. They see their need for, seek and receive help.*

1. The spiritual principle of Step One, ***I can’t do this alone—I am not in charge***, leads me to admit that I at least *need help* with my “drinking problem”.
2. The spiritual principle of Step Two, ***I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone***, expands my understanding of *my need for help* to include sane thinking. I *need help* to make sane, healthy choices, including God’s help to not take the first drink.
3. The spiritual principle of Step Three, ***I need to make a decision to seek God’s care***, makes me realize *I need spiritual help* with my drinking and with my “self-will run riot”.
4. The spiritual principle of Step Four, ***a searching and fearless moral inventory of myself***, uncovers the “wrong” things I do in my resentments, fears and inconsiderate treatment of other people that are *blocking me from the help I need from God*.
5. The spiritual principle of Step Five, ***admit the exact nature of my wrongs***, illuminates my discovery of what down deep in me, my *motives* for doing “wrong” things, needs to change so that I can *receive the help I need from God and other people*.
6. The spiritual principle of Step Six, ***ask God to help me be willing to “let go” of my “objectionable things”***, helps me realize *I need God’s help*, God’s Power, to “restore me to sanity” with my willingness to “let go” of my character defects, not just my drinking.
7. *God tried to help me* when I was drinking, in spite of my delusion that I did not need help.
8. *My “self-will run riot” can continue to cut me off from God’s help*. With my Step Six willingness prayers, I try to let go of the delusion that I can “fix me” by myself! “Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn’t go far enough.” (p. 68)
9. The spiritual principles of Steps One through Six disclose to me the limitations of self-help. *The delusion that I am all the help I need has to be smashed!*
10. The spiritual principles of Steps One through Six grant me enough **humility**, my “desire to seek and do God’s will” (12x12, p. 72), to “move out from [myself] toward others and toward God” (12x12, p. 76). *I am willing, honest and open-minded enough for Step Seven.*

**Next Time: The Spiritual Principle of Step Seven—“Humbly asked Him ...”**