

“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. Here, 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 and apply this principle..

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

So, too, are the unchanging *spiritual principles* of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Twelve Steps are unchanging 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 grow out of the spiritual principle of each step.

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Step Two. “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

The Spiritual Principle of Step Two.

Steps One and Two equip me with new information about me and my illness of alcoholism. I “admit” and “come to believe” this new information. My new information from Steps One and Two guide me to make a decision in Step Three to learn how to seek God’s care and stop living a life of “self-will run riot”.

I realize in Step One that if I continue to decide to do things my way, I am “doomed to an alcoholic death”. (p. 44) My spiritual principle from Step One is ***I can’t do this alone—I am not in charge.***

Step Two informs me that I need help from a Power greater than myself to make sane living choices, beginning with the choice to not take the first drink today, one day at a time.

My spiritual principle in Step Two is ***I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone.*** (p. 45)

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The Spiritual Principle of Step Two: “I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone.”

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

My spiritual awakening grows in Step Two when I become willing, honest and open-minded about three things:

1. If I don’t learn to live on a spiritual basis, I am doomed to an alcoholic death. (p. 44)
2. I need to find a *Power greater than myself* that could solve my problem. (p. 45)
3. I have to stop doubting the power of God. (p. 52)

“Came to believe ...”

My spiritual recovery is deeper than not drinking and changing the way I speak and act. My spiritual recovery is about changing the way I think—changing my motives—changing how I process emotions—changing the way I make decisions.

Step Three is the most significant decision I will ever make, after my decision to not take a drink today. Step Three offers me the choice “to be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis ...” (p. 44) In Step Three, I will decide to learn how to turn my will (my decisions) and my life (the consequences of my decisions) over to the **care** of God.

To make my Step Three decision on a fully-informed basis, I must “**come to believe**” certain things about me and my limitations as an alcoholic and as a person. I must *admit* that I am powerless over alcohol and *come to believe* that I am not God!

“... that a Power greater than myself ...”

Step Two begins by asking me *to believe that I am not God*:

- “... willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ...” (p. 46)
- “... am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?” (p. 47)
- “Every one of them ... and believes in, a Power greater than himself.” (p. 50)
- “Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.” (p. 52)

“... could restore me to sanity.”

- “... 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)
- “God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)
- “... spiritual liberation ... God made these things possible.” (p. 55)

The Prayers of Step Two.

- God, please grant me the willingness to believe in a Power greater than myself. (p. 47)
- God, please help me be open-minded on spiritual matters. (p. 48)
- God, please help me stop doubting the power of God. (p. 52)

The Promises of Step Two.

- “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)
- “God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)
- “... if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway.” (p. 55)
- “The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.” “
- “When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us.” (p. 57)

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“Suddenly I feel a wave of utter hopelessness sweep over me. I am in the bottom of hell. And there, a tremendous hope is born. It might be true.” (p. 215)

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The Urgency of “Admit” and “Come to believe” in the first 60-plus pages of the Big Book.

Spiritual Principles:

Step One: I can’t do this alone—I am not in charge.

Step Two: I need spiritual help to live a sober, sane life—I am not alone.

1. We are not meant to always understand life. We are not meant to always be able to explain life. We are meant to experience life honestly.
2. Steps One and Two are when I begin to “experience life honestly” as I admit the powerlessness and unmanageability of my alcoholism and my need for spiritual help.
3. “... they cannot differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one.” (p. xxviii)
4. “... they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving.” (p. xxx)
5. “These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took the first drink, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (p. 23)
6. “*There is a solution ... to accept spiritual help.*” (p. 25)
7. “Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (see p. 21) (p. 30)
8. “All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.” (p. 35)
9. “The alcoholic has no effective mental defense against the first drink. His defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)
10. “To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live life on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.” (p. 44)
11. “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.*” (p. 45)
12. “Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters ...” (p. 48)
13. “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)
13. “God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)
14. “ (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.” (p. 60)

Being convinced, *we were at Step Three.*”

Next Time: The Spiritual Principle of Step Three—“made a decision ... care of God”.