

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. Each step is an *unchanging, constant spiritual principle* to apply to our ever-changing life in recovery each day. We use the Twelve Steps to enlarge our spiritual life. God expands our spiritual awakening.

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

The Twelve Steps are *unchanging, constant spiritual principles* that we apply to our lives to experience our God-given spiritual awakening, our "change process".

The spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps don't change. We change. (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." (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. 568)

Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are "essential" changes
In my "ideas, emotions and attitudes" to enable me to apply the spiritual principle of each step.

Step Twelve. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ..."

"... we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences* which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe." (p. 25)

"Our real purpose ... be of maximum service to God and the people about us." (p. 77)

"... long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead." (p. 83)

"Love and tolerance of others is our code." (p. 84)

"... were we thinking of what we could do for others ..." (p. 86)

"... we tried to carry this message to alcoholics ..."

Chapter 7. "Working with Others."

"... insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." (p. 89)

Chapter Seven first describes how to *prepare for a first visit with a newcomer* to AA (pp. 89-96), and then presents guidelines, some "dos and don'ts", for *continuing sponsorship in applying the spiritual principles in our lives*:

"... cooperate, never criticize. To be helpful is our only aim." (p. 89)

"... part of their own **recovery**, try to help others." (p. 90)

"... hopelessness of alcoholism because you offer a **solution**." (p. 92)

*"The main thing ... willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by **spiritual principles**."* (p. 93)

"... if he is to **find God**, the desire must come from within." Step 2. (p. 95)

"The only condition is that he **trust in God** and clean house." Steps 3-9. (p. 98)

"... walk day by day in the path of **spiritual progress**." Steps 10-12. (p. 100)

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“... and [we tried] to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

Alcoholics Anonymous was written for alcoholics—and for non-alcoholics, as well:
 “... this account of our experiences will help everyone come to better understand ...” (p. xiii)
 “We hope this volume will inform and comfort those who are, or may be, affected.” (p. 18)
 “But for every man who drinks others are involved ...” (p. 104)
 “Let families realize, as they start their journey, that all will not be fair weather.” (p. 122)
 “... business fabric ... might be helped by better understanding all around.” (p. 137)
 “Many a distracted wife ... find loving and understanding companionship ...” (p. 160)

Chapter 8. “To Wives”, pp. 104-121.

In Chapter 8, spiritual principles are given to help a spouse or loved one who are living with active alcoholism. The spouse is encouraged to apply the spiritual awakening principles to help them deal with alcoholism—whether or not the loved one seeks spiritual help.

Spiritually healthy relationship practices are introduced in this chapter that are good for all of us. These include the *powerlessness* of any person to control or cure an alcoholic; the difference between healthy *helping* and un-healthy *enabling*; the difference between an *excuse* for behavior and an *explanation* of behavior. (See footnotes p. 104, 121)

Introduction and Encouragement.

“... we understand as perhaps few can.” (p. 104)
 “... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.” “

The Problem (the “Family Illness” of Alcoholism). Pp. 104-107.

“... hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding and fear.” (p. 104)
 “... maudlin sympathy to bitter resentment ... unselfish and self-sacrificing.” (p. 105)
 “... told lies ... prayed ... begged ... been patient ... struck out viciously.” “
 “We have run away ... hysterical ... terror stricken ...retaliatory love affairs ...” “
 “Our homes have been battlegrounds ... no friends ... never financial security.” “
 “... other women ... bill collectors, the sheriffs ... the bums, the pals ...” (p. 106)
 “... [lost] love of our children ... divorce ... ask medical advice ...” “
 “... sanitariums, hospitals and jails ... delirium and insanity ... death ...” (p. 107)

Needing “Step One”, i.e., being powerless over “alcohol” in another person.

“Had we fully understood the nature of the alcoholic illness ...” (p. 107)

Four Categories of Alcoholics, Pp. 108-114 (“The problem with which you struggle ...”)

These four categories differentiate alcoholics based on their desire to stop drinking.

The Solution—a Spiritual Answer.

“We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a **spiritual plane**. If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems too.” (p. 116)

Living with an alcoholic on a “Spiritual Plane”. (Healthy relationship practices.)

“Try not to condemn your alcoholic husband no matter what he says or does.” (p. 108)
 “... never be angry ... without rancor ... patience and good temper ...” (p. 111)
 “... never tell him what he must do about his drinking.” “
 “... reasonableness and patience ... be helpful rather than critical.” “
 “Tell him you have been worried ... want him to take care of his health.” (p. 112)
 “... try to help the wife of another serious drinker.” “
 “Wait until ... stumbling convinces him he must act ... decide for himself.” (p. 113)
 “Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords.” (p. 118)
 “Live and let live is the rule.” “

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Chapter 9. "The Family Afterward", pp. 122-135.

*"To Wives" deals with the issues of living with a drinking alcoholic. In Chapter 9, we encounter the family of the newly-sober alcoholic. We learn that the family can also use our **spiritual awakening principles** to deal with a newly-sober alcoholic member of AA.*

Healthy relationship practices are suggested in this chapter that are good for all of us—including family, friends and loved ones of alcoholics. These **spiritually**-healthy relationship practices are simple to state—and *virtually impossible to do without help from a Higher Power.*

As in Chapter 8, these **spiritually**-healthy relationship practices include the *accepting* of one person's *powerlessness* over another; the difference between healthy *helping* and un-healthy *enabling*; the difference between an *explanation* and an *excuse* for behavior.

"All ... meet upon the common ground of tolerance, understanding and love". (p. 122)

The Family Problem.

"We find the more one member of the family demands that the others concede to him, the more resentful they become ... discord and unhappiness (p. 122)

"The entire family is, to some extent, ill."

The Family Solution.

"All members of the family should meet upon the common ground of tolerance, understanding and love. This involves a process of [ego] deflation." (p. 122)

"... the family ... may do well to examine the **[spiritual] principles** by which the alcoholic member is trying to live." (p. 130)

Healthy Choices the Family Members Can Make, guided by Spiritual Principles.

"Cessation of drinking is but the first step away from a highly strained, abnormal condition ... living with an alcoholic ... make any wife or child neurotic." (p. 122)

"... the new structures will take years to complete." (p. 123)

"The alcoholic's past thus becomes the principle asset of the family ..." (p. 124)

... past occurrences should not be discussed." (p. 125)

"... temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance."

"... do not relate intimate experiences of another ... stick to our own stories."

"Let them praise his progress ... tolerance, love and **spiritual understanding**." (p. 127)

"... material well-being always followed **spiritual progress** ..."

"... family talks will be constructive ... without heated argument, self-pity, self-justification or resentful criticism."

"Though the family does not fully agree with dad's **spiritual activities** ..." (p. 129)

"... they should let him have his head."

"Whether the family has **spiritual convictions** or not, they may do well to examine the **principles** by which the alcoholic member is trying to live." (p. 130)

Opportunities for Spiritual Balance in Healthy Family Relationships:

Shared Family Leadership.	p. 130.	Enjoying Life Together.	p. 132.
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Balanced Outside Interests.	p. 131.	Capitalize Misery; Health.	p. 133.
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New Social Life.	p. 131.	Healthy Sexual Relations.	p. 134.
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Possible Religious Life.	p. 131.	Friendly Relations with Children.	p. 134.
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First Things First.	Live and Let Live.	Easy Does It.	(p. 135)
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"With God's help, I am able to exercise restraint from doing everything I think I have the power to do. Restraint is not a weakness, but a strength. Restraint is my acceptance of God's will and God's power to re-direct and guide my will."

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Chapter 10. "To Employers", pp. 136-150.

Chapter 10 is unique in Alcoholics Anonymous for several reasons. It is the only chapter, other than the "Doctor's Opinion", in the first 164 pages of the book not written by Bill W. It was written by Hank P., Bill's "right hand man" during the writing and publishing of the book. Hank had experience in large corporations, having had responsibility for 6,600 salesman servicing 28,000 dealers for Standard Oil of New Jersey.

Chapter 10 makes no direct mention of Higher Power, Spirit or God.

Chapter 10 is written to those who employ alcoholics.

Chapter 10 has numerous "suggestions" that are part of EAP programs today.

*Even though **spiritual principles** are not directly stated, the need for a **spiritual awakening** is implied throughout the chapter. After all, Hank P. knew what was in "this book"!*

The Workplace Problem: Not understanding the alcoholism illness.

"... I did not understand alcoholism as I do now." (p. 137)

(Three suicides of "misunderstanding": "Mr. B", "best salesman", "best organizer")

Examples of "Misunderstanding Alcoholism" ("crack the ego" of employer):

"... a fool of the first magnitude." (p. 137)

"... taken a cure ... if he has your will power and guts ..." (p. 138)

"... lack of understanding of what really ails the alcoholic ..." (p. 139)

"... the spineless and stupid ... weak, stupid and irresponsible." "

"... dealing only with habit, with stubbornness, or a weak will?" (p. 140)

The Workplace Solution: Understanding the alcoholism illness and the spiritual solution.

"We think the business fabric is shot through with a situation which might be helped by better understanding all around." (p. 137)

Acknowledge Alcoholism on the Job—Risk Awareness.

"If you concede that your employee is ill, can he be forgiven ..." (p. 140)

"When drinking, or getting over a bout ... will do incredible things." (pp. 140-141)

"Some [alcoholics] will try to take advantage of your kindness." (p. 141)

"... He wants to quit ... you want to help ... good business." "

Deal with Alcoholism on the Job—Risk Management.

"... want to help him ... you know about his drinking, and that it must stop." (p. 141)

"... do not intend to lecture, moralize, or condemn ... explain alcoholism, the illness ... does he want to get well?" (p. 142)

"Will he take every necessary step, submit to anything to get well ...?" "

"... physical treatment is desirable, even imperative." (De-tox) (p. 143)

"It is better for him to feel fully responsible." "

"... physical treatment is but a small part of the picture ... **transformation of thought and attitude ... place recovery above everything ...**" (p. 143)

"... this book ... contains **full suggestions** ...employee may solve his problem. ... it has worked with us ... **results** rather than methods?" (pp. 143-144)

"The [alcoholic] must decide ... for himself ... a great deal can be accomplished by the use of this book alone." (p. 144)

"... make use of his services with other[alcoholic] employees ..." (p. 146)

"... stop this waste ...give your worthwhile [employee] a chance." (p. 148)

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Chapter 11. “A Vision for You”, pp. 151-164.

Chapter 11 summarizes the “*program of attraction*” for the newcomer that the fellowship represents—the “*Twelfth Step*” between Bill W. and Dr. Bob—fellowship and Twelve Step *growth* in Akron and New York—the “*vision*” of a ***spiritual awakening*** for all alcoholics.

“The Vision”, Part One: The Fellowship.

“I know I must get along without liquor ... Have you a sufficient substitute?
Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in
Alcoholics Anonymous.” (A substitute for liquor and its delusion: p. 151, para. 1) (p. 152)
The “vision” for the newcomer is the fellowship as not only a “sufficient
substitute” for liquor but as “vastly more than that”—a vision of a ***spiritual awakening***:
“We meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship ...” (p. 15)
“... shared in a common peril ... discovered a **common solution** ...” (p. 17)
“... see how our **experience** can benefit others.” (p. 84)
“... to see a fellowship grow up about you ...” (p. 89)
“Offer [the newcomer] friendship and fellowship.” (p. 95)
“You will be bound to them with new and wonderful **ties** ... escape disaster
together ...commence shoulder to shoulder your **common journey**.” (pp. 152-153)
“... give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life.” (p. 153)
“... a glimpse of your future ... describe the growth of the fellowship ...” (pp. 153-159)

“The Vision”, Part Two: The Twelve Steps Produce the Spiritual Awakening.

“Should you wish ... and are willing to make use of our **experience** ...” (p. 153)
(See the revealing description of “the hideous Four Horsemen”, p. 151)
“... in 1935, one of our number ... other alcoholics ... sanity returned ...” (pp. 153- 154)
“[Bill W.] related his **experience** [to Dr. Bob S.]” (p. 155)
“... a **spiritual experience** [**awakening**] was absolutely necessary ...” “
“... both saw that they must keep **spiritually active**.” (p. 156)
“The two friends spoke of their **spiritual experience** ...” (p. 157)
“They shared their homes, their slender resources ...” (p. 159)
“A year and six months later these three had succeeded with seven more.” “

“The Vision, Part Three: Alcoholics Anonymous Grows ... and Grows ... and Grows ...

“Seeing much of each other, scarce an evening passed that someone’s home did not
shelter a little gathering of men and women, happy in their **release**, and constantly
thinking of how they might present their **discovery** to some newcomer.” (pp. 159-163)

*We meet to share our **spiritual awakening** with others. The fellowship alone is not recovery.*

“Many a distracted wife ... find loving and understanding company ...” (p. 160)
“Many an alcoholic who entered there came away with an answer ...the
expressions on the faces ... indefinable something in the eyes ... the stimulating
and electric atmosphere of the place ... the absence of intolerance ...” (p. 160)
“No one is too discredited or has sunk too low ... if he means business.” (p. 161)
“Thus we grow ... a matter of willingness, patience and labor.” (pp. 162- 163)

Step Twelve Prayer and Promise. “God will constantly disclose ... house is in order.”

Our spiritual awakening: born in desperation—nurtured in hope—growing in application.