

"WE CLAIM SPIRITUAL PROGRESS RATHER THAN SPIRITUAL PERFECTION."

A Big Book Twelve Step Study of our "Happy, Joyous and Free" Journey of Recovery,
April 3 through June 26, 2023 Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo.
(All quotes from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women
who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body." (p. xiii)

"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ..." (p. 60)

"We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." (p. 60)

"We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free." (p. 133)

*How do I get from "seemingly hopeless" to a "spiritual awakening" filled with
"spiritual progress"—living a life where I can be "happy, joyous and free"?*

My journey of spiritual awakening begins as a faint **HOPE for spiritual help** that
grows in Steps One, Two and Three as I begin to move away from "the gates of insanity
and death" of my hopelessness. ("... conscious of His presence..." p. 63)

My spiritual journey continues as I learn to grow in **RELATIONSHIP with the Spirit**
in Steps Four and Five. ("... walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe." p. 75)

I grow spiritually in Steps Six through Nine as my **FAITH in God as I understand God**
strengthens. ("... God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves." p. 84)

I remain on my spiritual journey as I learn to live **LIFE in God's care** each day with
Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve. ("See to it that your relationship with Him is right ..." p. 164)

*In this Twelve Step "Big Book" study workshop, we consider the essential contribution each step
makes in our "Happy, Joyous and Free" journey of recovery and spiritual progress.*

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HOPE for Spiritual Help. "... as we became conscious of His presence ..."

Step Three. "(c) That God could and would if He were sought." (p. 60)

**"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God
as we understood Him."** (p. 59)

"All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life." (p. 35)

This ominous reminder warns us that *learning* in Step One about my alcoholic obsession, illusion
and delusion is essential but insufficient to treat my alcoholism.

Learning in Step Two about the hope of a spiritual solution for my alcoholism is essential
but insufficient. *To continue my recovery from a "seemingly hopeless state of mind and body", to live a
"happy, joyous and free" life, I must apply what I have learned in Steps One and Two.*

Step Three is a decision to do just that. In Step Three, I decide, I choose, to learn how
to seek and "accept spiritual help" (p. 25); to find that my "mental defense ... must come from a Higher
Power" (p. 43). *In Step Three, I decide—I choose—to take my first action to apply
the experience of others: "When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us." (p. 57)*

I may not realize it, but in Step Three I decide to claim my spiritual awakening!

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"Being convinced, we were at Step Three ..." (p. 60)

(Then comes two more pages of "convincing! See "Observation", p. 3 att'd)

All of the information in Alcoholics Anonymous up to and including Chapter Four

"We Agnostics" convinces me of the truth of my alcoholism:

that I am alcoholic and can not manage my own life;

that "no human power could ... relieve [my] alcoholism";

"that God could and would if He were sought".

In Step Three, I decide to learn how to seek care from the God of my understanding. (p. 3 att'd)

*According to Alcoholics Anonymous, **what is, Who is, "God as I understand Him?"***

"... a power greater than themselves ..." (p. xxviii)

"... a Power greater than myself." (p. 10)

"... a God personal to me ..." (p. 12)

"*Why don't you choose your own conception of God?*" "

"... children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship ..." (p. 28)

"... the way he established his relationship with God." (p. 29)

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

"... Power greater than ourselves." (p. 45)

"... we mean your own conception of God." (p. 47)

"... Power greater than himself ... accomplished the miraculous ..." (p. 50)

"... Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives ..." (p. 51)

"... stop doubting the power of God." (p. 52)

"We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us." (p. 55)

In Step Three, I decide what to do with "my will" and "my life".

What are "my will" and "my life"?

My "will" are my decisions: "... we have made decisions based on self ..." (p. 62)

My "life" is the sum of the consequences of my decisions: "So our troubles,
we think, are basically of our own making." "

In Step Three, I decide to "turn over" my will and my life to the "care of God".

What does it mean for me to "turn over" to the "care of God?"

"God, I offer myself to Thee ..." This is my part in Step Three. (p. 63)

I am deciding to **"turn over"** my control of my life to God. I am not giving
up my will. I decide to learn how to seek God's care (direction) of my will.

The rest of my Step Three prayer tells me what the **"care of God"** looks like:

"... to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt."

"Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will."

"Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I
would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life." (p. 63)

My Step Three decision relieves me of hopelessness. I am "conscious of His Presence". (p. 63)

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Observation: Step Three is my decision to seek the spiritual solution for my self!

"The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success ...

always in collision ... even though our motives are good." (p. 60)

"... if only people would do as he wished ..." (p. 61)

"... sure that other people are more to blame. He becomes angry ... self-pitying." "

"Is he not really a self-seeker even when trying to be kind?" "

"... a producer of confusion rather than harmony?" "

"Selfishness—self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles" (p. 62)

"... alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so." "Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us. God makes that possible."

"This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work." (p. 62)

God doesn't change ... I change. My understanding of God changes.

"We had a new Employer ..." (p. 63)

I must always be alert to that part of my self-will that wants to be self-employed!

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A Healthy and Helpful Relationship with God as I understand God.

A *healthy* relationship with God satisfies my desire for security. I feel emotionally safe and secure trusting God to provide what I need. When I trust God with my emotional life, I do not have to depend on other people for my emotional security.

A *helpful* relationship with God satisfies my desire to remove uncertainty from my life. I am able to live more calmly in uncertainty, trusting that God is in charge and has my best interest at heart in the long run. I trust God even when I don't fully understand God.

"God as I understand Him" means that God is definitely a Power greater than me that can solve my problem of "self-will ruin riot"; that I trust God's character; that God knows more about me and what is good for me than I do; that God truly *cares* about me and for me.

I cannot trust myself 100%. I cannot trust other people 100%. I can afford to trust God 100%.

Trusting God 100%, "conscious of His presence", means I can live in contentment and security without trusting myself or other people 100%.

"God as I understand Him does NOT mean God as I can predict, explain or control;
God that I will always feel comfortable with;
God that I will never be angry with;
God that I will not get tired of waiting to act.

Next Time: Step Four. "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.