

**“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.*

**HOPE for Spiritual Help. “... as we became conscious of His presence ...”**

**Step Two.** “(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.” (p. 60)

**“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”** (p. 59)

In Step One, I learn that I have a physical allergy to alcohol. Once I take even one drink, the overpowering physical craving of my allergy “kicks in”. I cannot stop drinking once I start. Yet, I feel so good after a few drinks that I keep trying to have a few drinks—feel good—and stop. My life becomes centered on alcohol—an *obsession* of my mind that crowds out all else.

I live in an *illusion* that I can control alcohol.

I live in a *delusion* that I am not powerless—that my life is not unmanageable.

I must become willing to “stop starting”—to stop taking the first drink. Even when I desire to do so, I do not have the power to “stop starting”. I don’t want help, but I need help.

AA says I need a Power greater than myself to help me, to *restore* me to sane thinking.

In Step Two, I come to believe in a Power greater than myself. This Power guides me, *restores* me, to make a sane choice to not take the first drink—and other sane choices as well. I will be on the path from a “seemingly hopeless” life to a life that is “happy, joyous and free”.

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*Until I admit my problem, I don’t want or need your “restoring” spiritual solution!*

***If I need to be “restored to sanity”, does that mean I am insane?***

“People feared for my sanity.” (p. 7)

“Then came the insidious insanity of that first drink ...” (p. 8)

“Rumor had it that he had been committed for alcoholic insanity.” (p. 9)

“... lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.” (p. 21)

“... main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body.” (p. 23)

“... the great obsession of every abnormal drinker.” (p. 30)

*(obsession of the mind crowds out all else)*

“... persistence of this illusion ... into the gates of insanity or death.” “

*(illusion of believing I am in control)*

“... delusion ... has to be smashed.” “

*(delusion that I am not powerless and that my life is not unmanageable)*

“... less control, which led in time to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization.” “

“... inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish.” (p. 34)

“What sort of thinking dominates ... desperate experiment of the first drink?” (p. 35)

“... insanity ... insanely trivial excuse ... insane idea ... insanely insufficient ...” (p. 37)

“... where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane.” (p. 38)

“... the subtle insanity which precedes the first drink ...” (p. 40)

“... an alcoholic mentality ... was a hopeless condition.” (p. 42)

“... 100% hopeless, apart from divine help.” (p. 43)

“... any life run on self-will can hardly be a success.” (p. 60)

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

“Is he not a victim of the delusion ... if he only manages well?” “

“Selfishness—self-centeredness ... root of our troubles ... self-delusion ...” (p. 62)

“... alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so ... must be rid of this selfishness ... God makes that possible.” “

*I hope for “restoration” from a Power greater than myself when I see it working for others.*

***How have others found a restoring “Power greater than ourselves”?***

“... the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady ...” (p. xvi)

“... the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.” (p. xxvii)

“... more than human power ... to produce the essential psychic change.” (p. xxix)

“... Power greater than myself ... Spirit of the Universe ... God personal to me ...” (p. 10)

“... only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself.” (p. 12)

“... revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them ...” (p. 14)

“There is a solution ... central fact of our lives today ... accept spiritual help.” (p. 25)

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

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

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power ... a Power greater than ourselves ... which will solve your problem.” (p. 45)

“Every one ... gained access to, and believes in, a Power greater than himself.” (p. 50)

“... hundreds of people are able to say that the consciousness of the Presence of God is today the most important fact of their lives ... one should have faith.” (p. 51)

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**HOPE for Spiritual Help. “... as we became conscious of His presence ...” (Con’t)**

**Step Two.** “(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.” (p. 60)

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*My hope grows for “restoration” from a Power greater than me as I am “sick and tired of being sick and tired” from trying to manage and control my drinking, and my life, in my way alone.*

**How do I find, “come to believe in”, a restoring Power greater than myself?**

“... we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it.” (p. 25)

“If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.” (p. 33)

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

“Lack of power, that was our dilemma ... find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (p. 45)

“... a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ...” (p. 46)

“... your own conception of God.” (p. 47)

“... am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?” “

“Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on spiritual matters as we had tried to be on other questions.” (p. 48)

“... we had to stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work. But the God idea did.” (p. 52)

“God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (p. 53)

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

“The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life run on self-will can hardly be a success.” (p. 60)

*I am “a victim of the delusion that [I] can wrest satisfaction and happiness out of this world if [I] only manage well”. My delusional thinking goes beyond my delusions about my drinking. I am willing to hope, to “come to believe”, that a Power greater than myself can help me.*

*John C. said to me, “There are only two things you need to know about God ... there is One—and you are not it!” I began to “come to believe in a Power greater than myself”.*

**Observations.**

I want to ignore and deny my limitations, such as my powerlessness over alcohol. I must come to realize and believe that in my human limitations lie my spiritual “restoration” opportunities.

There is a “spiritual beckoning” hidden in my powerlessness—“deep down in every man, woman and child” (p. 55). God discloses this to me in my desperation of my unmanageable life.

This “spiritual beckoning” is my deep desire to live a “happy, joyous and free” life. I desire to find the way, the spiritual path, of my new “restored” life journey—without alcohol to hinder me.

I decide to try to trust God, even when I don’t have full “understanding”. I continue to trust God, even when I don’t have full “understanding”. I trust that God will restore me to sanity.

**Next Time: Step Three.** “(c) That God could and would if He were sought.”