

“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 in *Steps One, Two and Three* as a faint **HOPE for spiritual help** that grows 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 in *Steps Four and Five* as I grow in **RELATIONSHIP with the Spirit**. (“... walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.” p. 75)

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

God enlarges my spiritual life each day with *Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve* as I learn to live **LIFE in God’s care**. (“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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FAITH in GOD as I understand God. “... God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

Step Nine. “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.”

“Now we need more action ... faith without works is dead ... we have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends.” (p. 76)

“At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order.” (p. 77)

“Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past.” (p. 76)

In Steps One through Five, I learn I need help from God and what in me blocks me from God’s help. In Steps Six and Seven, I become willing to ask God to help me “let go” of what is blocking me and “let God” remove from me what is blocking me from God’s help. In Step Eight, I seek God’s help to become willing to take responsibility for the harms I’ve done to others and to become willing to make amends.

Now in Step Nine I seek God’s help for the willingness to make my direct amends. I become accountable for my wrongs. *I become more free from the “bondage of self” of guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear concerning my past behaviors that block me from God’s help. I am becoming fit “to be of maximum service to God and the people about [me]”.* (p. 77)

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FAITH in GOD as I understand God. “... God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.”

Step Nine. “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

“Probably there are still some misgivings.” (p. 76)

Guilt, regret, remorse, shame, fear—all these can give me “misgivings” about making direct, face-to-face amends to the people I have harmed.

What an irony! The very things that might block me from making my direct amends In Step Nine—guilt, regret, remorse, shame, fear—are the parts of my “bondage of self” that Step Nine will reduce!

So I continue my willingness prayers for each person on my Step Eight list.

I let God help me move from “need to” work the steps to “want to” work the steps.

*Throughout my Step Nine work, **prayer** should be my first choice, not my last resort!*

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed ... we are willing to make amends.” (p. 76)

(Italics in this section are mine)

“... *business acquaintances and friends* ...” (pp. 76-77)

“... in a demonstration of good will ...” (willingness)

“... *the man we hated* ...” (pp. 77-78)

“... go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ...” . “

“... *our creditors* ...” (p. 78)

“... we do not dodge our creditors ...” . “

“... we have committed a *criminal offense* ...” (pp. 78-79)

“We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing.”

“... we ask [God] that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing ...” (p. 79)

“Usually, however, *other people* are involved.” (pp. 79-80)

“We thought he ought to be willing.” (willingness) (p. 79)

“... asked God to help ...” (p. 80)

“... placed the outcome in God’s hands ...” (p. 80)

“... *domestic troubles* ...” [The Marriage] (pp. 80-82)

“... God willing, it shall not be repeated.” “ (p. 81)

“... *at home* ...” [The Family] (pp. 82-83)

“... asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.” (willingness) (p. 83)

“We asked God to help us ...”, p. 67, sets me in my role in my relationship with God.
First I ask God to help me—then I thank God for helping me, regardless of the outcome.

“If we are sorry for what we have done, and have the honest desire let God take us to better things, we believe we will be forgiven and will have learned our lesson.” (p. 70)

In Step Nine, I let God do for me what I cannot do for myself. I use God’s Power, God’s Love and God’s strength to be willing and accountable in my direct amends.

I am putting my life in order today by being responsible and accountable for the mistakes I made yesterday. I am becoming fit to be of maximum service to God and others.

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**Observations regarding the Contribution each of the First Nine Steps makes to my
“Journey of Spiritual Recovery” from “seemingly hopeless” to “happy, joyous and free”.**

Step One. I **admit** my powerlessness over alcohol. I **admit** my obsession with alcoholic living is not sane and makes my life unmanageable. I let go of my delusion of control.

Step Two. I become willing **to believe** in a Power greater than myself that can “restore” me—to the sane choice to not take the first drink, and other sane choices, as well.

Step Three. I **decide** to seek and “accept spiritual help” (p. 25); that my “mental defense ... must come from a Higher Power” (p. 43) ... that can “solve [my] problem” (p. 45).

I become “conscious of [God’s] presence”. (p. 63)

Step Four. I enlarge my spiritual life (see p. 35) by **uncovering what** in my resentments, angers, fears and inconsiderate behavior, sexual and otherwise, **is blocking me** from the spiritual help of my Higher Power, the God of my understanding.

Step Five. I **admit** to the **exact nature** of my wrongs. I admit that I am powerless over my **selfish motives** that cause my resentful, angry, fearful and inconsiderate actions—motives such as lust, greed and too much desire for attention and approval.

I feel that I am “walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe”. p. 75)

Step Six. I **admit** that my selfish motives are **objectionable things** and ask God for the **willingness to “let go”** of these unhealthy motivations.

Step Seven. I **humbly** ask God for the **willingness to “let God”** remove my objectionable things from me, as well as other things in me that God knows are blocking me from being of service to God and others.

Step Eight. I **take responsibility** for the wrongs I did to others and the harms I caused them by **listing their names** and **asking God for the willingness** to make my amends to them. I ask for the willingness for each name until it comes. My guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear about my past behavior that are blocking me from God’s help further “melt away”.

Step Nine. I become willing to **be accountable** for my wrongs. I make willing, direct amends to each person I have harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others. The wounds of my guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear are healing. There will be some “emotional scar tissue”—but no more “open wounds”.

I realize that “God is doing for [me] what I could not do for myself”. (p. 84)

My faith in God grows the more I trust God to help me. I am no longer hopeless. I am happy, joyous and free. I am becoming fit to be of maximum service to God and the people about me.

Next Time: Step Ten. “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.”