

## **Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change in the Twelve Steps of AA**

*A Twelve-Step Study of Alcoholics Anonymous (the "Big Book")*

July 3 through September 25, 2023. Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, MO

(Quotes from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

- July 3. A Brief History of "Alcoholics Anonymous, The Story of ..." Why we study the "Big Book"—Spiritual Awakening/Personality Change, Appendix II.
- In this study, we see how the Twelve Steps of our Spiritual Awakening change our personalities, as summarized below, from the selfish, all-consuming traits listed into traits in line with God's will for us—healthy for us and helpful to others.*
- July 10. Steps One and Two: the "information". *From delusions about my lack of power; close-minded—to see my need for, and the possibility of, spiritual help.*
- July 17. Step Three: the "decision". *From "playing God" to seeking God's care.*
- July 24. Step Four: the "uncovering". *From anger, resentment, fear and inconsideration to asking God for help to review my conduct.*
- July 31. Steps Five and Six: the "discovering". *From secrecy and unwillingness to admitting the truth about myself.*
- August 7. Steps Seven and Eight: the "discarding" and "responsibility". *From lack of trust, blame and avoiding responsibility to en-trusting myself to God and willing to be responsible for my wrongs.*
- August 14. Step Nine: the "accountability". *From avoiding being accountable to being accountable with God's help.*
- August 21. Step Ten: the "continue to watch for". *From complacency to increasing humility.*
- August 28. Step Eleven: the "continue to seek". *From "I don't need more help" to seeking God's help all day, every day.*
- September 4. Step Twelve, Part I: "working with others". *From not caring about other alcoholics to desiring to try to "carry the message" to alcoholics.*
- September 11. Step Twelve, Part II: "family relationships". *From not caring about family members to caring about and giving to family members.*
- September 18. Step Twelve, Part III: "in all our affairs/AA Fellowship". *From not caring about other people to caring about all other people, in and out of AA.*
- September 25. Spiritual Awakening, Personality Change and Emotional Sobriety.

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### A Brief History: Why Alcoholics Anonymous was written.

- c.1930 Roland H. seeks help from Dr. Jung for his alcoholism. (pp. 26-27)
- 1934, July. Roland H., sober in the Oxford Groups, "12-steps" Ebby T. (PIO, p. 113)
- 1934, summer. Dr. Silkworth pronounces Bill W. a hopeless alcoholic. (p. xvi, p. xxv, p. 6)
- 1934, November. Ebby visits Bill and tells him his "story". (pp. 8-14, NG pp. 16-17)
- 1934, December. Bill's **spiritual awakening** in Towns Hospital in New York City. (pp.13-14)
- 1934, December to May, 1935 Bill works with alcoholics, stays sober himself ... no one else gets sober!  
*Dr. Silkworth tells Bill to stop "preaching" the spiritual solution until after he has explained the problem of the alcoholic illness.* (p. xvi, PIO p. 133)
- 1935, May. Bill meets with Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio. (p. xvi, pp. 155-156, pp. 179-180)  
*Bill explains the alcoholic illness problem, then the spiritual solution.*
- 1935, June 10. Dr. Bob has his last drink. Alcoholics Anonymous is "founded". (p. 180)
1937. New York AA's leave the Oxford Groups. (p. xvi, WTBB p. 135)  
*Too much emphasis on "absolutes" instead of "spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection" and dealing with problems other than alcoholism.*
- 1937, November. Bill and Dr. Bob meet in Akron, count 40 sober members, see success.  
*They decide to write a book "because the recovery message in which we now had such high confidence might soon be garbled and twisted beyond recognition."* (p. xvii, PIO pp. 178-179)
- 1938, May. Bill begins writing "There is a Solution" and "Bill's Story".  
*The challenge: try to "explain the unexplainable".* (WTBB pp. 107 -155)
- 1938, summer-fall. Bill writes more of the "Book", except "How it Works" and "Into Action".  
(WTBB pp. 271-437)
- 1938, December. Bill writes the Twelve Steps, "How it Works" and "Into Action".  
(WTBB pp. 439-489)
- 1939, April. Alcoholics Anonymous is published.

### References in addition to Alcoholics Anonymous:

12x12. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

PIO. Pass It On, the Story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world.

WTBB. Writing the Big Book, by William Schaberg.

NG. Not God, by Ernest Kurtz

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**"Alcoholics Anonymous, The Story of ..."** (p. iii)

"We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics *precisely how we have recovered* is the main purpose of this book." (p. xiii)

"... A.A.'s basic text ..." (p. xxiii)

"... plan of recovery described in this book." (p. xxv)

"... great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism." (p. 17)

"It is the purpose of this book to answer such questions specifically." (p. 20)

"... clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered." (p. 29)

**"[The book's] main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem."** (See p. 62 for the *problem* — "*self-will run riot*") (p. 45)

### **Why We "Study" the Big Book.**

We use a three-fold *purpose* and *process* to use to study and learn to apply the book:

1. **Learn to read**, and *continue* to **read**, the book, the "black part".  
Whether we dis-agree or don't understand, we "read this book". (See p. 112)
2. **Seek to understand** the book, with the help of our sponsor and each another.  
A healthy AA Fellowship is grounded in the spiritual principles of the book.
3. **Try to apply** the book in our daily life, in *all* our relationships, one day at a time.  
We use the spiritual principles each day to gain relief from our "self-bondage".

Here is an example of this three-fold process—a sentence from Chapter Five, "How It Works":

**"Rarely** have we seen a person **fail** who has thoroughly followed **our path**." (p. 58)

"**Rarely**" means hardly ever. So this is a promise based on their experience.

What is "**our path**"? "... directions are given showing how we have recovered." (p. 29)

What does it mean to "**fail**"? "... he **failed** to enlarge his spiritual life." (pp.14-15; p. 35)

What is "success"? "... pursue the spiritual remedy ... with a willingness ...". (p. xvi)

## **Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change in the Twelve Steps of AA.**

**Appendix II. "Spiritual Experience"** (Added to book March, 1941, First Ed., 2nd ptg.) (p. 567)

"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."

"Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

"... the newcomer ... realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone."

"'Yes', replied the doctor, 'there is. Exceptions to cases such as yours have been occurring since early times ... alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences ... in the nature of huge emotional displacements and rearrangements [of] Ideas, emotions, and attitudes.' " (Dr. Carl Jung diagnosis of Rowland H., c. 1930) (p. 27)

*In this study, we see how the Twelve Steps of our Spiritual Awakening change our personalities from selfish "ideas, emotions and attitudes" into God-centered "ideas, emotions and attitudes", as we grow in our "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism".*

**Next Time: Steps One and Two. My "personality" problem and the spiritual solution.**