

“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** as I begin to move away from “the gates of insanity and death” of my hopelessness and my delusion of control. (“... 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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LIFE in God’s Care. “See to it that your relationship with Him is right ...” (p. 164)

Step Twelve, Part II. “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, **we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.**” (p. 60)

In Steps One through Three, I am given a **hope for spiritual help**.

In Steps Four and Five, I grow in my **relationship with the Spirit**.

In Step Six through Nine, I strengthen my **faith in God as I understand God**.

In Steps Ten through Twelve, I learn to live **life in God’s care** one day at a time.

My spirit is “awakened”. With Step Twelve, I *enlarge my spiritual life* each day. I try to carry the message of my spiritual awakening to other alcoholics. I try to practice these spiritual principles in all of my situations, circumstances and relationships. I am not hopeless. I learn to walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. I am “happy, joyous and free”.

*Spiritual principles are of little value in the abstract or in mere discussion. Spiritual principles only take on meaning and power when I try to **apply** them in my life today!*

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LIFE in God’s Care. “See to it that your relationship with Him is right ...” (p. 164)

Step Twelve, Part II. “... we tried to carry this message to alcoholics ...” (p. 60)

“...we tried to carry this message to alcoholics ...” *The message of my spiritual awakening.*

Chapter 7. “Working with Others”

“Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can.

You can secure their confidence when others fail.” (p. 89)

“Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when one alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope.” (p. xxii)

“Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.” (p. 58)

“*Of far more importance was the fact that he was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience. In other words, he talked my language.*” (p. 180)

Chapter 7 is organized in two parts. The first part, pp. 89-96, guides us in preparing for, and conducting, our *first visit with a newcomer*:

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

“... one of a fellowship ... part of their own recovery, try to help others.” (p. 90)

“Tell him ... about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences ...” (p. 91)

“... begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady.” (p. 92)

“... your own experience ... mental condition ... first drink ...” “

“... talk ... about the hopelessness of alcoholism ... you offer a solution.” “

“*Tell him exactly what happened to you.*” (p. 93)

“Stress the spiritual feature freely ... *Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.*” “

“... use everyday language to describe spiritual principles.” “

“... your story will help him see where he has failed to practice ...” “

“Outline the program of action ... how you ... how you ... why you ...” (p. 94)

“If your talk has been sane, quiet and full of human understanding ...” “

“On your first visit tell him about the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.” “

“If he shows interest, lend him your copy of this book.” “

“Tell him if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.” (p. 95)

“He should not be pushed or prodded ... to find God, the desire must come from within.” “

The second part of Chapter 7 begins on p. 96 and continues to the end of the chapter.

This part might be characterized as the *guidelines for on-going “sponsorship”*:

“Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision and tell his story ...” (p. 96)

“The only condition is that he trust God and clean house.” (p. 98)

“Remind the prospect that his recovery is not dependent upon people. It is dependent upon his relationship with God.” (pp. 99-100)

“Both ... must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress.” (p. 100)

“Your job now ... be of maximum helpfulness to others ...” (p. 102)

LIFE in God’s Care. “See to it that your relationship with Him is right ...” (p. 164)

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Step Twelve, Part II (con’t). “... and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (p. 60)

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

“Practice”? Each day I *try to apply* Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve in each part of my life.

“Principles”? The *principles* of the Twelve Steps, i.e., honest, self-exam, forgive, service.

“Affairs”? *All* of my situations, circumstances and relationships, *every day*.

Chapters 8, 9, 10 and 11 contain many *applications* of our spiritual *principles* (bold type mine):

Chapter 8. “To Wives”

“... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.” (p. 104)

“... never be angry”. (See p. 67!) (p. 111)

“Patience and good temper are most necessary.” “

“... never tell him what he must do ...” “

“Don’t set your heart on reforming ...” “

“... you want to be helpful rather than critical.” “

“... adopt a spiritual way of life ... smoother.” (p. 114)

“If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems, too.” (p. 116)

“Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords.” (p. 118)

“Live and let live is the rule.” “

“When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings.” (p. 119)

“... place the problem, along with everything else, in God’s hands.” (p. 120)

Chapter 9. “The Family Afterward”

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

“... admire him for what he is trying to be ...” (p. 123)

“... they forgave each other and drew closer together.” (p. 124)

“... a spirit of love and tolerance.” (p. 125)

“... when there is tolerance, love, and spiritual understanding.” (p. 127)

“... show unselfishness and love under his own roof.” “

“... growing consciousness of the power of God in our lives.” (p. 130)

“... powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness.” “

“... capitalize [misery] to demonstrate [God’s] omnipotence.” (p. 133)

Chapter 10. “To Employers”

“We all had to place **recovery** above everything ...” (p. 143)

“... this book ... **full suggestions** by which ... solve his problem.” (pp. 143-144)

“... conscientiously following the program of **recovery** ...” (p. 147)

Chapter 11. “A Vision for You”

“... a substitute [for liquor] ... is a **fellowship** in Alcoholics Anonymous.” (p. 152)

“... commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey.” (p. 153)

“A **spiritual experience**, he conceded, was absolutely necessary ...” (p. 155)

“He had begun to have a spiritual experience.” (p. 158)

“... transcended by the happiness they found in giving themselves to others.” (p. 159)

“... accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor.” (p. 163)

“God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (p. 164)

“See to it that your relationship with Him is right ... etc.” “