

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.)

The Twelve Steps of our Spiritual Awakening change our personalities from selfish "ideas, emotions and attitudes" into God-centered "ideas, emotions and attitudes". We grow spiritually in our "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism ..." (p. 567)

Spiritual Awakenings, Spiritual Experiences and Personality Changes.

"The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." (p. 60)

Our individual Spiritual Awakenings, Spiritual Experiences and Personality Changes *are* unique to each one of us. That doesn't mean that one is "right" and one is "wrong". We simply have different spiritual awakenings and personality changes when we work the steps. One of us isn't "better" or the other "worse". Comparisons are un-healthy and can even be dangerous.

*Each of our **spiritual awakenings** and **personality changes** are equally valid, as long as we each try to apply the un-changing spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our ever-changing lives each day with willingness, honesty and open-mindedness.* (See App. II, p. 568)

Each of the Twelve Steps is an un-changing spiritual principle. Water freezing at 32 degrees Fahrenheit at sea level is an un-changing principle that is part of a change process, as water changes from liquid form to solid form at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Likewise, we apply the un-changing spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our ever-changing individual lives as God enlarges our unique, personal **spiritual awakenings** and **personality changes**.

Note. We can be grateful that Bill W. experienced his personality change of humility which led him to add Appendix II in the Second Printing of the First Edition, March 1941!

Step Four. Pages 63 through 71.

"**Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.**" (p. 59)

WE **WRITE** A PERSONAL INVENTORY, AND **PRAY**, TO UNCOVER THE THINGS IN US THAT BLOCK US FROM OUR **SPIRITUAL AWAKENING** OF GOD'S CARE.

"... a course of vigorous action ... a personal housecleaning ... which many of us had never attempted ... a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us." (from our **personality change** and **spiritual awakening**). (pp. 63-64)

*Step Four begins my "course of vigorous action", my "strenuous effort", to implement my Step Three decision to seek God's care. In Step Four, I **write**—and **pray**—to receive God's help to **change my personality** so I can **honestly uncover** what in me is blocking me from allowing God to grow my **spiritual awakening**. My **personality** becomes more honest.*

WHY do I need to learn to do *honest*, healthy self-examination with Step Four?

"Our liquor was but a symptom." (p. 64)

"So we had to get down to causes and conditions."

"... we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure."

"If ... our conduct continues to harm others, we are quite sure to drink." (p. 70)

"... swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself." (p. 71)

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HOW I learn to do healthy self-examination with Step Four.

*My work in the inventory process is to **write** the answers to the questions and **pray** the prayers that accompany them. I don't rationalize or justify my answers. I **write** and **pray**.*

I write my Step Four Resentment Inventory "at once" after my Step Three prayer.
I pray for God's help throughout my Step Four inventories to grow my **spiritual awakening**.

"Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations." (Resentments, Fears, Sex / Inconsideration) (p. 64)

Step Four helps me get **honest** with myself, not "morbid reflection" or self-shaming.

.....
"**Resentment** is the 'number one' offender ... destroys more alcoholics ... spiritual disease ... when the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically." (p. 64)

"But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave ... fatal ... we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit ... insanity of alcohol returns ... we drink again ... die." (p. 66)

"In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper." (p. 64)

Column One

Who am I resentful at?

"We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry."

Column Two

Why do I resent them?

"Why we were angry", i.e., what they did.

Column Three

How does it affect me?

"My injuries", i.e., self-esteem, fear, sex relations, security.

"We went back through our lives ... thoroughness and honesty." (p. 65)

"... this world and its people were ... wrong ... as far as most of us ever got." (p. 66)

"... people continued to wrong us ... we tried to have our own way ... worse..."

"... people really dominated us ... resentments must be mastered, but how?"

We learn to ask God—to pray to God—for help, as we continue with our inventory!

"We asked God to help us ..." (p. 67)

"This is a sick man. How [God] can I be helpful to him?"

"God save me from being angry. Thy will be done."

"We avoid retaliation or argument ... God will show us how to take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one."

The Column Four questions of the Resentment inventory are on p. 67:

"Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been selfish, dis-honest, self-seeking and frightened ... where were we to blame?"

"When we saw our faults, we listed them." (p. 67)

*My **personality** becomes more honest as I see what part I play in my resentments.*

"Before sunlight can shine through a window, the blinds must be raised."

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"[**Fear**] was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. ... circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve." (p. 67)
"... fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble." (p. 68)
"... because self-reliance failed us." "

"We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them." (p. 68)

<u>Column One</u>	<u>Column Two</u>	<u>Column Three</u>	<u>Column Four</u>
Who and what do I fear?	Why do I have this fear?	Did self-reliance fail me in my social, security or sexual ambitions?	Was I "cocky", selfish or dis-honest?

"For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God." (p. 68)

"Trusting and relying upon God"? Step Three prayer and Resentment Inventory prayers!

"We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves." "

"We never apologize for God ... let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do." "

"We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us **be**. At once, we commence to outgrow fear." (p. 68)

"Being" is how I am with God. My personality becomes more honest as I grow to "be" more in God's care. I have less fear blocking my spiritual awakening.

Sexual Conduct (Inconsideration) Inventory.

"Now about **sex**." (p. 68)

"We all have sex problems ... hardly be human if we didn't. What can we do ...?" (p. 69)

"We reviewed our own conduct... got this all down on paper and looked at it." "

<u>Column One</u>	<u>Column Two</u>	<u>Column Three</u>	<u>Column Four</u>
Whom did I hurt?	Did I arouse jealousy, suspicion or bitterness [in them]?	Where was I selfish, dishonest or inconsiderate?	Where was I at fault? What should I have done instead?

Here my inconsideration is uncovered as a block to my spiritual awakening.

"We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them." (p. 69)

"... we ask God what we should do about each specific matter." "

"... we let God be the final judge." (p. 70)

"... we ... let God take us to better things ..." "

"... that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him." (p. 71)

I complete my Fourth Step to uncover what is blocking me from my spiritual awakening. My personality becomes more honest. I am eager to move forward in my spiritual awakening!

Next Time Steps Five and Six: Discovering the "Objectionable" things.