

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. We each have different spiritual awakenings and personality changes. *Each is valid!* One of us isn't "better" or the other "worse". Comparisons are un-healthy and 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**.

Steps Five and Six, Pages 72-76: Discovering the "Objectionable" Things.

Step Five. "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

WE DISCOVER WHICH "WEAK ITEMS" IN US "BLOCK" OUR **SPIRITUAL AWAKENING**.

I am "trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with [my] Creator, and to discover the obstacles in [my] path ... to put [my] finger on the weak items in [my] personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on [my] part ..." (p. 72)

*With Step Five, I continue my "course of vigorous action" to seek God's care to **change** my **personality** traits that block me from allowing God to grow my **spiritual awakening**.*

Why isn't writing my Fourth Step and reading my Fourth Step to myself enough?

"If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking." (p. 72)

"... keep to themselves certain facts about their lives." ("Sick as our secrets!") "

"They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear; they only *thought* they had humbled themselves." (*Humility: see AA 12x12, p. 72 and p. 76*) (p. 73)

"We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past." (This is the one-sentence direction for doing Step Five.) (p. 75)

What is it to "admit the exact nature of [my] wrongs"?

I *honestly admit*, not excuse or justify, my behavior. *This treats my fear of being wrong.*

I am *humble* enough to admit my wrong, regardless of others' wrongs. *This treats my pride.*

Motive (**Nature** of wrong) ... leads to **Choice** ... leads to **Action** ... leads to **Consequence**.
(*Desire to Judge*) (*Decide to Not Forgive*) (*Blame*) (*Resentment*)

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The Step Five Promises.

(p. 75)

The Step Five Prayer.

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*In Step Five, I discover my motives, the "nature" of my wrongs. I see what **personality change** is needed in my motives so that God can grow my **spiritual awakening**.*

Step Six. "Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

WE BECOME WILLING TO "LET GO", TO "DISCARD", OUR OBJECTIONABLE THINGS.

*With Step Six, I become willing, with God's help, to "let go" of my "objectionable things", the "nature" (motives) of the "wrongs" in my **personality** traits that are blocking me from receiving God's care. I become willing to let God further expand my **spiritual awakening**.*

"If we can answer to our satisfaction ..."

(p. 76)

Carefully reading the first five proposals, we ask:"

(p. 75)

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| 1. Have [I] omitted anything? | Lied. |
| 2. Is [my] work solid so far? | Honest. |
| 3. Are the stones properly in place? | Nature of my wrongs. |
| 4. Have [I] skimmed on the cement put in the foundation? | Told partial truth. |
| 5. Have [I] tried to make mortar without sand? | Omitted prayers. |

"... we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable."

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| "... with a willingness he had never before been able to muster." | (p. xvi) |
| "... a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself." | (p. 12) |
| "... accept spiritual help ... were willing to make the effort ..." | (pp. 25-26) |
| "... a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ..." | (p. 46) |
| "The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines." | (p. 60) |
| "... we must be willing to grow toward it ... willing to make amends ..." | (p. 69) |

"Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?"

These selfish *motives* of my **personality** are not filling my need for safety, security and self-esteem. (See AA 12x12, p. 42) The things I cling to are blocking my **spiritual awakening**.

*Am I ready to "let go"—to live without the selfish motives of my **personality** traits?*

"Can He now take them all—every one?"

The simple answer is, Yes, God can. God is certainly able. *Once again, I find that I am in the way of me!* The question is not "can God?"—but whether I can "let go" so God can!

"If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."

I ask God to grant me the willingness to "let go" of my "objectionable things".

With my Step Six prayer, I ask God for the willingness to "let go", to discard, that which I am unable to do on my own. "We could not wish them away any more than alcohol." (p. 66)

*I **needed** spiritual help in Steps One through Four. I now want spiritual help!
I ask God to make my **personality** willing to "let go" so God can grow my **spiritual awakening**.*

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"WE CHOOSE FORGIVENESS!" ... *difficult to remember when someone has hurt us badly.*

Forgiving others can reduce and even eliminate our resentments—a personality change that opens us to an ever-greater spiritual awakening.

Our unwillingness to forgive allows negative thoughts and emotions, including anger, resentment, envy, jealousy, self-righteousness and revenge, to grow and consume us. We cling to selfish personality traits of judgment, separating ourself from God and others.

Understanding the Meaning of Forgiveness.

Alanon: ODAT, p. 120. The meaning of forgiveness.

CTC, p. 75. "Before Alanon forgiveness meant power to me."

p. 289. "The most loving form of detachment ... forgiveness."

AA: Big Book, p. 84. "Love and tolerance of others is our code."

(Forgiveness **does not** relieve them of responsibility or consequences; does not mean I don't feel the pain, hurt and loss, pretend it never happened; mean a restored relationship.

p. 67. "When a person offended we said ... God save me from being being angry."

(Forgiveness **means** I am free of the poison of resentment.)

The Consequences of Remaining Unforgiving.

Alanon: PTR, p. 68. Being unforgiving feeds revenge, self-pity, self-justification isolation and complacency; expecting forgiveness from others.

p. 123. "... common principles of recovery include forgiveness.."

AA: Big Book, p. 66. "... this business of resentment ... is fatal."

p. 134. "... a pathetic hardness and cynicism ... cannot seem to forgive."

12x12, p. 78. "The first [obstacle] ... has to do with forgiveness."

"...why shouldn't we start out by forgiving them, one and all?"

The Benefits and Promises of Forgiveness.

Alanon: HAW, pp. 85-86. How God helps us use forgiveness to heal the wounds of: resentments ... self-righteousness ... self-destructiveness ... anger ... hatred ... fear ... grudges ... hostility ... shame.

AA: Big Book, p. 67. "When a person offended, we said ...'God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.'"

p. 84. "Continue to watch for ... resentment ...". "... we ask God at once to remove them."

p. 86. "After making our review we ask God's forgiveness ..."

p. 118. "Live and let live is the rule."

p. 125. "... temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance."

12x12, p. 58. "... we first felt truly able to forgive others."

p. 99. "Lord, make me a channel of thy peace ... that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness."

(AA-Alcoholics Anonymous; 12x12-AA Twelve and Twelve; ODAT-Alanon One Day at a Time; CTC-Alanon Courage to Change; PTR-Alanon Paths to Recovery; HAW-How Alanon Works.)

Next Time Steps Seven and Eight: the "discarding" steps.