

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**.

.....
***Personality changes** are incremental and cumulative. Each one strengthens all of them. My **personality changes** in my **spiritual awakening** in the first ten steps include: *delusion* and *dishonesty* changing to **honesty**; *defiance* and *denial* changing to **willingness**; "playing God" as a *know-it-all* changing to **open-minded**; **willing** to be **honest** about *uncovering* the "flaws in our make-up"; **open-minded** enough to discover my motives, the "nature of our defects"; **willing, honest** and **open-minded** enough to ask God to help me "let go" (discard); more **trust** and hope, less *fear*, in the uncertainty of God's will for me; **responsible** for my *wrongs* that harmed others; **accountable** to others in my amends to them for my *wrongs*; **willing** to **continue** "to grow [spiritually] in understanding and effectiveness".*

"The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*" (p. 83) *I desire to grow my spiritual life. Step Ten keeps me in the "spiritual life" each day, so I don't drift back into "self-will run riot". Step Ten is my spiritual "course correction" that I **continue** to practice throughout my day.*

Step Eleven. Pages 85 through 88.

"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we *understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

In Step Eleven, I seek God's will each day to guide me, limit me and direct me to live in God's will each day—my spiritual "course direction" that I couple each day with Step Ten.

*Each day, I couple Step Eleven with Step Ten to allow God to keep growing my **spiritual awakening** and **changing** my **personality** to have more desire to seek God's will, not my will, in every area of my life. I ask God for help before I know I need help—so I have help when I do need help. My "self" improves as a "team effort" with God as my "Coach".*

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.)

"To some extent we have become God-conscious."

With Step Ten, I guard against resisting God's will—"continue to watch for ..." (p. 84)

"We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense ... but ... more action." (p. 85)

"... prayer and meditation ... works ... proper attitude and work at it." (pp. 85-86)

"When we retire at night, we constructively review our day."

(p. 86)

My **spiritual awakening** has **changed my personality** so that I have an **attitude of willingness** to do a meditative review of my Step Ten work that day:

"Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology, etc." "

"After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." I complete my spiritual work for the day with a prayer asking God for forgiveness and direction. *I have come to believe in God's forgiveness of me.*

"On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead."

(p. 86)

My **spiritual awakening** grows and my **personality change** increases in **willingness, honesty** and **open-mindedness** when I begin each day in meditation and prayer, seeking God's help to *direct my thinking away from* "self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives". (See "motives", p. 70) "

I meditate on how God wants me to think today. I "ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision." I "relax and take it easy". *I let God calm my emotions.* "

My "thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration." (p. 87)
I let God calm my emotions and inspire my thinking before I take up the day's action.

Then, I pray that I "be shown all through the day what [my] next step is to be, that [I] be given whatever I need to take care of such problems." "

"As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask [God] for the right thought or action."

(p. 87)

I connect this with Step Ten—"continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear". I ask God again for the "right thought" so that I can be inspired to take the "right action"—"right" on God's terms, not mine. Is it healthy for me? Is it safe, helpful and non-hurtful for others? For me, this is God's "right action".

"The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*" (p. 83)

"We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined."

(p. 88)

My **spiritual awakening** results in my **personality change** "sufficient to bring about [my] recovery from alcoholism". This is not "discipline" as punishment. This is the discipline of daily spiritual routine—I **ask God to calm my emotions and guide my thinking before I take any action**—"spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection".

"It works—it really does."

(p. 88)

Steps One through Eleven **change my personality** from a selfish one to a God-centered one. I **continue to seek** to let God grow my **spiritual awakening**. I **seek** to be in God's care, free of "self-will run riot"—to have God's care all day, every day.

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.)

Observations on Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change through Step Eleven.

- * *God's work, God's help*, in my recovery is always available. Most of *my work* in my recovery consists of *seeking God's help* to keep my self-will from blocking *God's will* from my life:
 - "Came to believe" in my Higher Power in Step Two sets aside the delusion of Step One that my self-will wants me to believe—that I am not powerless;
 - "Made a decision" in Step Three puts me on a spiritual path to restrain my "self-will run riot"; to learn how to let *God's will* guide, limit and direct my will—self-will run by God!
 - "Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves" helps me *uncover* what part of my "self-will run riot" is blocking me from the *help I need from God*;
 - "Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs" guides me to *discover*, to admit, my selfish, unhealthy motives that need to change into motives centered in *God's will*, not my will;
 - "Were entirely ready to have God remove" and "Humbly asked [God] to remove" discloses that I cannot remove, or *discard*, my selfish, objectionable character defects without *God's help*, even after I know I need to and sincerely want to;
 - "Made a list of all persons we had harmed ... became willing to make amends ... Made direct amends to such people ..." to reduce my guilt, shame, regret, remorse and fear. I take these actions with the responsibility and accountability that only come with my continuing willingness prayers for *God's help* to set aside my self-will, which is too prideful or too fearful for me to make these amends;
 - "Continued to take personal inventory" throughout each day directly guides, limits and directs my self-will with *God's will*—away from selfish feelings, thoughts and actions that would otherwise be driven by selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear;
 - "Sought ... to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood [God]* ..." through prayer and meditation each day helps me avoid selfish thinking and selfish actions when I couple this daily discipline with my continuous personal inventory.
- * The promises in the steps grow my faith that my **spiritual awakening** and my **personality changes** mean an improved life for me and those around me. I continue to seek to live in *God's will*. As a result, I become more mature. I grow in self-esteem. I develop self-respect
- * "So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined." (p. 88)
The "discipline" of the Steps, my **spiritual awakening** and **personality change**, is my *opportunity* each day. It is through God's grace, God's love and God's tolerance that I am given my *opportunity* for daily spiritual "discipline". This "discipline" is not an entitlement. Entitlement is the enemy of gratitude. Thus, entitlement is the enemy of God's grace.
- * "God will constantly disclose more to you and to us." (p. 164)
We will always live in uncertainty. My self-will competes with my desire for God's will to help me deal with uncertainty. My **spiritual awakening** has **changed** my **personality** enough that I trust God with the uncertainty of my life. However, for this trust in God to be real in my life today, I must continue to try to apply the spiritual principles of the Steps in my life today.

Next Time Step Twelve, Part I: "Working with Others"—from "not caring" to "helping".