

## **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**.

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***Personality changes** are incremental and cumulative. Each one strengthens all of them:*

- Step One - Delusion and dishonesty begin to change to **honesty**. (Read p. 568)
- Step Two - Defiance and denial begin to change to **willingness**. (Read p. 62)
- Step Three - Being a know-it-all, "playing God", begins to change to **open-minded**.
- Step Four - **Willing** to become **honest** about *uncovering* the "flaws in our make-up".
- Step Five - **Open-minded** enough to *discover* my motives, the "nature of our defects".
- Step Six - **Willing, honest** and **open-minded** enough to ask God to help me "let go".
- Step Seven - More **trust** and **hope** in the uncertainty of God's will for me.
- Step Eight - I become **responsible** for the wrongs I've done that have harmed others.

### **Step Nine. Pages 76 through 84.**

**"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."** (p. 59)

In Step Nine, I become **accountable** to others as I amend the wrong things I have done to them. I **trust** in God to help me forgive them. I am **willing** to make restitution where I can.

"How they respond to my direct amends is none of my business." What!? This idea conflicts with my life-long desire for others to accept me—agree with me—approve of me!

I am uncertain about their response to my amends. I fear rejection or reprisal. I place my **trust** and **hope** in God. I become **accountable** for my amends even in my uncertainty:

*My **personality** changes as I learn to apply the **spiritual** principles of the first Eight Steps. I become more **willing, honesty, open-minded, trusting, hopeful, responsible** and **forgiving**. I ask God for the **willingness** to be **accountable**, and **forgive**, in Step Nine.*

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*With Step Nine, I go to each person on my Step Eight list, wherever possible, and am **accountable** to them for the wrong thing(s) I did to them that caused them harm. I admit my regret. I commit to them that, with God's help, I will not do that to them again. In my direct amends, my fear of my past and pride in myself no longer block my **spiritual awakening**.*

**"We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves."** (p. 76)

In Step Nine, I my **personality change** continues. I pray for God's strength to be **willing, forgiving and accountable** "to sweep" my "debris" in my relationships with others.

**"If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes."** (p. 76)

*Prayer is a work of the will. My mind tells me I don't need to pray (pride). My emotions tell me I can't afford to pray (fear). God's will guides my will to re-direct my mind and quiet my emotions so I can have the **will** to be **accountable** and proceed with healthy, **forgiving** direct amends. Pride and fear no longer block my **spiritual awakening** as I pray for **willingness**.*

**"As we look over the list of [persons] we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis."** (p. 76)

I don't make my amends from a "God-on-high soapbox". I do mention God when appropriate, such as "with God's help, I will try to never do this to you or anyone else again".

**"... we are trying to put our lives in order ... not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."** (p. 77)

**"... all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends."** (p. 76)

*"... business acquaintances and friends ..."* (pp. 76-77)

*"... sincere desire to set right the wrong."* (p. 77)

*"... with tact and common sense."* "

*"... the man we hated ..."* (p. 77)

*"We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ..."* (p. 77)

*"His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own."* (p. 78)

*"Most alcoholics owe money."* (p. 78)

*"We do not dodge ... must lose our fear of ... creditors."* (p. 78)

*"... committed a criminal offense ..."* (p. 78)

*"... ask that we be given strength and direction"* (p. 79)

*"... other people are involved."* (p. 79)

*"... admitting his faults ... asking **forgiveness** ..."* (p. 79)

*secured their consent ... the outcome in God's hands ...".* (p. 80)

*"... we have domestic troubles."* (p. 80)

*"... admit our fault ... God willing, it shall not be repeated."* (p. 81)

*In Step Nine, God helps me "pocket" my pride and my fear. I make direct amends to all I have harmed by my wrongs. I am **accountable** to them and **forgiving** of them. I **trust in** God for strength to make each amend and **hope in** God to help me accept their response.*

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### **"Pausing in the Promises": Step 3 (p. 63), Step 5 (p. 75) and Step 9 (pp. 83-84).**

*The "promises" describe our **personality change** in our **spiritual awakening**.*

### **Observations: Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change in Steps One through Nine.**

- \* Uncertainty is the "incubator" for my trust in God. In my uncertainty, I learn to trust God. I learn to trust God with the uncertainty in my life. My hope grows in God's will for me.
- \* God *never* promises to meet my expectations. God *always* promises to meet my needs.

In my **spiritual awakening**, my recovery from "self-will run riot", my **personality changes** lead me to admit and accept the difference between my expectations and my needs.

- \* I grew up with a great fear of "being wrong". I learned to conceal this fear by calling myself a "perfectionist". I believed if I was wrong, I would not be accepted—be respected—be approved by God, myself or others. I turned my back on God—tried to deny the existence of God. I lied to God, to myself and to others about ever being "in the wrong". Steps One through Nine guide my **personality change** in my **spiritual awakening**. I stop fearing "being wrong". I admit and accept when I am wrong and make amends to others for my wrongs. I am less of a "know-it-all". I am less often a permanent critic of others.
- \* Before recovery, all my relationships were based on domination or manipulation. I created the illusion of control in my life so that I would feel safe and secure—"in charge"! Steps One through Six release me from my *illusion of control* and my *delusion that I'm not powerless* as I grow in my **personality changes of willingness, honesty and open-mindedness**. I **trust** God with the "known" things about me that need to change. In Step Seven, I **trust** God with the "unknowns" about me. I **hope** God changes them.
- \* In Step Eight, I let God grant me the strength to become **responsible** and admit my wrongs done to others. I feel my guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear begin to "melt away".
- \* Step Nine is my first specific public application of my **personality changes of willingness, honesty, open-mindedness, trust, hope, responsibility, accountability and forgiveness**. I let God grant me strength to be **accountable** and **forgiving** in my amends to others.
- \* As I make my direct amends, I **trust** God more to help me be "an equal among equals" in all my relationships. I become free of my need to dominate and manipulate others. Pride and fear become less influential in my relationships with other people. I grow more in my **spiritual awakening** and **personality changes** of placing my **trust** and **hope** in God.

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"We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough." (p. 82)

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead." (p. 83)

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

***Next Time Step Ten: the "continue to watch for" step.***