

## **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**.

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".

*"Willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery. But these are indispensable."* (p. 568)

In Steps One through Six, my **personality changes**. I become **willing, honest** and **open-minded** enough to admit known things about myself: my powerlessness; my delusion that I'm not powerless making my life unmanageable; that there is a Power greater than me than can help me; my need to stop "playing God" and learn to trust God's Power; how to "uncover" and "discover" the objectionable things in me that block me from God's Power and God's help; to ask God for the willingness to "let go" of my known "objectionable" things.

*But what about the things in me blocking me from God's help and my service to others that I don't know about? With Step Seven, my **spiritual awakening** and **personality changes** move from my "known" things to include "unknown" things about me that only God knows!*

*In Steps Seven and Eight, my continuing "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism" becomes more about God's will for me, not my will for me. I learn to **trust** in the uncertainty of God's will with more **hope** and comfort than before.*

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### **Steps Seven and Eight, Pages 76-83: "Discarding" our Objectionable Things.**

#### **Step Seven. "Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."**

*In Step Seven, I ask God with more "willingness, honesty and open-mindedness" for the **personality changes of trust and hope**. I become willing to "let God" remove from me every "shortcoming" blocking my usefulness to God and others ... the ones I know and the ones that only God knows! I **trust** God with "all of me". I **hope** God enlarges my **spiritual awakening**.*

**"When ready, we say something like this ..."** (p. 76)

In Step Six, I ask God for willingness to "let go" of my known objectionable things. In Step Seven, I *humbly* ask God for willingness to **trust** God to remove my objectionable things and to remove from me things of which I am not even aware. I set aside more of my *fear of uncertainty* as a barrier to my **spiritual awakening** in Step Seven.

*I discover my **hope in** uncertainty in Step Seven. My **hope in** God's often uncertain will for me grows. My fear of uncertainty becomes less of a barrier to my **spiritual awakening**, as my **hope in** uncertainty grows. My **personality** changes. I have more **trust** and more **hope**.*

**"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad."** (p. 76)

*Reaching the point of "all of me" is incremental and cumulative!*

I "offer myself" to God in Step Three as I *know* myself then. in a general way. (p. 63)

I ask God for help with specific *known* defects in my Step Four inventories. (pp. 64-71)

I "admit my wrongs" with *certainty* to God, myself and another in Step Five. (p. 75)

I ask God for willingness to "let go" of *certain* objectionable things in Step Six. (p. 76)

In Step Seven, I **trust** God with "all of me", with **hope in** *uncertainty*. (p. 76)

**"I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows."** (p. 76)

*Step Seven re-defines "healthy" for me—"my usefulness to [God] and others".*

The "unhealthy" things in me that need to be removed become "objectionable, i.e: "don't take the first drink"; "quit living in anger and unforgiveness"; "quit living in fear"; "quit being inconsiderate"; "quit being sarcastic"; "quit judging/blaming/shaming".

**"Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding."** (p. 76)

*God, please help me **be** and **do** the "healthy" thing, not the "unhealthy" thing.*

**"Amen."** (p. 76)

**In Step Six, I ask God for the willingness to "let go" so God can help me.**

**In Step Seven, I ask God for the willingness to "let God" use me to help others.**

*In Step Seven, with humility, I go "all-in" with God. I am now willing to let God discard my "objectionable things" (Step Six) and more. God enlarges my **spiritual awakening**. I ask God, and God grants me, strength to do God's will. My **personality changes** more as I **trust** God's character with **hope in** the uncertainty of God's will, the most important Power in my life.*

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### **Step Eight. "Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."**

*With Step Eight, my **personality changes** as I ask God to help me be **willing** to be **responsible** for the harms I have caused others. I become more **honest** and **open-minded**. I continue forgiving others. My feelings of guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear diminish.*

*There are two "action parts" to Step Eight—writing a list and praying for more willingness!*

**"We have a list of all persons we have harmed ..."**

(p. 76)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>WRONG THING I DID</u>	<u>WILLING TO MAKE AMEND</u>
Dad	Dis-respected him.	"Yes" ... or "not yet".
Boss	Lied to him.	"
Wife	Cheated on her.	(Discuss in Step 9)

**"... and to whom we are willing to make amends."**

(p. 76)

*My desire to blame others for their "wrongs" keeps blocking me from God's help. I **fear** their response or reprisal if I go to them with my amends. When I read my list of the wrongs I did and the harms I caused, I still experience *guilt, regret, remorse* and *shame*.*

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

(p. 76)

*Now, I **pray**. I ask God for "the will to do this"—to be **willing** to take **responsibility** and to be **honest** with myself about the amends I owe to each person for my wrongs.*

*I **trust** God to help me stop blaming. I **hope** with God's help to forgive them. I feel forgiveness—relief from the "bondage of self" of my guilt, regret, remorse and shame.*

**"Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."**

(p. 77)

*I let God make me "fit ... to be", as in these "*to be*" results of Step Eight prayers:*

"... a sincere desire to set right the wrong."	(p. 77)
"... willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense."	"
"We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ..."	"
"We do not dodge our creditors."	(p. 78)
"We must lose our fear of creditors."	"
"... we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing ..."	(p. 79)
"We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary ..."	"
"... asked God to help ..."	(p. 80)
"He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands ..."	"
"We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated."	(p. 81)
"Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind."	(p. 82)
"The spiritual life is not a theory. <i>We have to live it.</i> "	(p. 83)

*In Step Eight, I ask God to help me be **willing** to be **honest** about my **responsibility** for the harms I caused others. I am **open-minded** enough to ask God to help me forgive them. My **personality changes** of **trust** and **hope** in God's strength enlarge my **spiritual awakening**.*

**Next Time Step Nine: the "accountability" step.**