

## **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)

We each have unique **Spiritual Awakenings** and **Personality Changes**. *Each is valid!*

Each Step is an un-changing spiritual principle. Water freezing is an un-changing principle that is part of a change process, water changing from liquid form to solid form. Likewise, we apply the un-changing spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps to our changing individual lives so that God can enlarge our **spiritual awakenings** and **personality changes**.

*We 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)

#### **"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps ..."**

My **personality changes** in my **spiritual awakening** in the first eleven 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 seek** "to improve our conscious contact with God" all day every day.

"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 is my spiritual "course direction" that I use to **seek** God's will for me each day.*

### **Step Twelve, Part II: the "family relationship" step.**

**"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried ... to practice these principles in all our affairs."**

"So we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love." (p. 83)

"Our behavior will convince them more than our words ... ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone." "

Chapters Eight and Nine of Alcoholics Anonymous make clear the many opportunities for the alcoholic, the spouse and other family members to apply the **spiritual awakening** and **personality changes** resulting from the Twelve Steps in their relationships.

"... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome." (p. 104)

"If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems too." (p. 116)

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Note: Healthy relationship practices (**personality changes**) presented in both Chapters 8 and 9 include the *powerlessness* of any person to control or cure an alcoholic; the difference between *healthy helping and un-healthy enabling*; the difference between *excusing behavior* and *explaining behavior*—all virtually impossible without a **spiritual awakening**.

(See footnotes p. 104, p. 121)

### **Chapter 8, "To Wives". Pages 104 — 121.**

*In Chapter 8, opportunities for **spiritual awakening** and **personality changes** are given to help a spouse or loved one who are living with active alcoholism.* (See p. xiii)

#### **The "Family Illness" (Alcoholism) before Spiritual Awakening and Personality Changes:**

- "... hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding and fear." (p. 104)
- "... maudlin sympathy to bitter resentment ... told innumerable lies ... begged ... struck out viciously ... run away ... been hysterical ... terror stricken ... had retaliatory love affairs ... no friends ... never financial security." (p. 105)
- "... other women ... bill collectors, the sheriffs ... the bums, the pals ..." (p. 106)
- "... [lost] love of our children ... divorce ... ask medical advice ..." "
- "... sanitariums, hospitals and jails ... delirium and insanity ... death ..." (p. 107)
- "Had we fully understood the nature of the alcoholic illness ..." (p. 107)

### **Four Categories of Alcoholics, based on their desire to stop drinking, pp. 108-110.**

#### **The Solution—Spiritual Awakening and Application of Personality Changes:**

- "... we understand as perhaps few can." (p. 104)
- "... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome." "
- "Try not to condemn your alcoholic husband no matter what he says or does." (p. 108)
- "... never be angry ... without rancor ... patience and good temper ..." (p. 111)
- "... never tell him what he must do about his drinking." "
- "... reasonableness and patience ... be helpful rather than critical." "
- "Tell him you have been worried ... want him to take care of his health." (p. 112)
- "... try to help the wife of another serious drinker." "
- "Wait until ... stumbling convinces him he must act ... decide for himself." (p. 113)
- "... how much better life is when lived on a **spiritual plane**. If God can solve the age-old riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems too." (p. 116)
- "Patience, tolerance, understanding and love are the watchwords." (p. 118)
- "Live and let live is the rule." "

### **Chapter 9, "The Family Afterward". Pages 122 — 135.**

*In Chapter 9, opportunities are given to help the family of a newly-sober alcoholic use **spiritual awakening** and **personality changes** to seek "common welfare" with the alcoholic.*

#### **The Family Problem (Alcoholism) before Spiritual Awakening and Personality Changes:**

- "We find the more one member of the family demands that the others concede to him, the more resentful they become ... discord and unhappiness." (p.122)
- "The entire family is, to some extent, ill." "

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### **Chapter 9, "The Family Afterward". Pages 122 — 135, cont'd.**

#### **The Family Solution—Spiritual Awakening and Application of Personality Changes:**

- "All members of the family should meet upon the common ground of tolerance, understanding and love. This involves a process of deflation." (p. 122)
- "Cessation of drinking is but the first step away from a highly strained, abnormal condition ... living with an alcoholic ... make any wife or child neurotic." (p. 122)
- "... the new structures will take years to complete." "
- "The alcoholic's past thus becomes the principle asset of the family ..." (p. 124)
- "... past occurrences should not be discussed." (p. 125)
- "... temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance." "
- "... do not relate intimate experiences of another ... stick to our own stories." "
- "Let them praise his progress ... tolerance, love and spiritual understanding." (p. 127)
- "... material well-being always followed spiritual progress ..." "
- "... family talks will be constructive ... without heated argument, self-pity, self-justification or resentful criticism." "
- "... not fully agree with dad's **spiritual activities** ... let him have his head." (p. 129)
- "Whether the family has **spiritual convictions** or not, they may do well to examine the **principles** by which the alcoholic member is trying to live." (p. 130)

#### **Opportunities for Spiritual Balance ("common welfare") in Family Relationships:**

Shared Family Leadership.	p. 130.	Enjoying Life Together.	p. 132.
Balanced Outside Interests.	p. 131.	Capitalize Misery; Health.	p. 133.
New Social Life.	p. 131.	Healthy Sexual Relations.	p. 134.
Possible Religious Life.	p. 132.	Friendly Relations with Children.	p. 134.

*First Things First. Live and Let Live. Easy Does It.* (p. 135)

*Chapters 8 and 9 present opportunities for application of my **spiritual awakening and personality changes** in all my family relationships, as well as in all my other relationships.*

#### **Observations on Spiritual Awakening and Personality Change Application in Step Twelve.**

- \* My **spiritual awakening**, my relationship with God, is enlarged when I try to allow my **personality to change** to be less self-centered and more God-centered with others.
- \* Healthy, God-centered relationships are not selfish; not controlling; not "they are wrong".
- \* With God's help, our differences become opportunities to seek our "common welfare".
- \* There is joy and happiness in forgiving others and trying to give to others
- \* I came into Alcoholics Anonymous a *victim* in my relationships. (See p. 68) I became a *survivor* in my relationships. (See p. 77) I am living in *spiritual recovery* in my relationships due to my **spiritual awakening** and **personality change**. (See p. 130)

***Next Time—Step Twelve, Part III: the "in all our affairs" step.***