

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path.”

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

“Love and tolerance of others is our code.”

A Big Book Study of Spiritual Recovery from “Self-will Run Riot” to Service and Serenity.

A Twelve-Step Workshop from January 1 through March 25, 2024

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo. USA

(All page numbers from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

The term “path” is used in Alcoholics Anonymous to describe our *Twelve Step journey of spiritual growth* from “what we used to be like”, through our “spiritual awakening”, to “what we are like now”—our “way out” of recovery from alcoholism (See p. 17). Each step guides us to get on, and stay on, “our path” of the Twelve Steps with awareness, acceptance and action.

Our spiritual awakening happens in us and for us as we stop doing things that block it from happening to us. We learn “situational awareness” on “our path” of spiritual recovery:

Steps One and Two inform me. Aware of my incurable illness of alcoholism, I accept my need for a spiritual restoration to recover from my illness. (p. 30, p. 44, p. 60)

In Step Three, I act in prayer (decide) to seek my restoration, God’s “care” of my will and my life. I “get on the path” of my spiritual recovery from alcoholism. (p. 63)

In Step Four I act—I write and pray—my self-examination inventories. I am aware of, and accept, my resentments, fears and inconsiderations that create my “spiritual mis-alignment”, blocking me on my path of spiritual growth and recovery (pp. 63-71)

In Step Five, God and my spiritual “path-finder” help me accept honestly the exact nature of my character defects—motives that drive the wrong things I do. (pp. 72-75)

In Step Six, I am aware, accept and act. I ask God to help me “let go” of my “wrongs”/ “defects of character”/“shortcomings” (p. 59), “flaws in our make-up” (p. 64), “obstacles” (p. 72), “every twist of character” (p. 75), “things ...objectionable” (p. 76)

In Step Seven, I am aware, accept and act. I humbly ask God to remove my “objectionable” things from me and the unknown things “blocking my spiritual path”.

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

(p. 59)

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends ... we took inventory ... a drastic self-appraisal.”

(p. 76)

My “situational awareness” grows on my spiritual path from Step Four to Step Eight:

“... was our self-esteem, our security, our ambitions ... interfered ...?” (p. 65)

“... others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got.” (p. 66)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” (p. 67)

“Where were we to blame?” “

“We admitted our wrongs honestly ... willing to set these matters straight.” “

“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (p. 68)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?” (p. 69)

“Where were we at fault, what should we have done instead?” “

“We ... pray for the right ideal ... for sanity ... for the strength ...” (p. 70)

“... you have ... digested some big chunks of truth about yourself.” (p. 71)

“... relationship with our Creator ... discover the obstacles in our path.” (p. 72)

“... we ask if we have omitted anything ...” (p. 75)

“... we ask God to help us be willing ... [to] let go ...” (p. 76)

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.” “

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Step Eight. “**Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.**” (p. 59)

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends ... we took inventory ... a drastic self-appraisal.” (p. 76)

I ask God in my Step Seven prayer to “grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.” I am *aware* God wants me to do more to continue with my “spiritual re-alignment”. God “bids” me to “have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends.” This is my Step Eight *responsibility*. (Underline mine) (p. 76)

My list includes names of the people from my Step Four inventories. In Step Four, I saw these people as causing trouble, harm, pain and loss to me.

I now accept that I have done harm to them.

I prepare to admit directly to the person I harmed that I was wrong. I resist taking this Step Eight *action* of writing, praying and pausing for at least three reasons:

1. They hurt me—they need to make amends to me—to admit to me they were wrong.

“To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got.” (p.66)

2. I am too proud to admit I was wrong.

“... extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so.” (p. 62)

3. I am afraid to admit I was wrong.

“... self-reliance was good ... but it didn’t go far enough.” (p. 68)

“We attempt to sweep away the debris ...” (p. 76)

I can’t “sweep away the debris” until I know what it is. I become *aware* that the “debris” that is causing some of my “spiritual mis-alignment” on my “path of spiritual recovery” are the guilt, regret, remorse and shame that I feel from the harmful wrongs I have done to others. I *accept* my responsibility to make amends.

Some of my “spiritual mis-alignment” is corrected when I admit my wrongs in Step Five to God, myself and another human being. More of my “spiritual mis-alignment” is corrected in my Step Eight writing and prayer *action* of “spiritual re-alignment”.

I take responsibility for my wrongs. My guilt, regret, remorse and shame lift from me.

“If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask[God] until it comes.” (p. 76)

With more of God’s help, I *act* to complete my list of names of every person I have ever harmed and become willing to make direct amends, wherever possible.

With help from God for willingness, I am aware of my need to make direct amends. I accept my responsibility to write my list and prepare to admit and amend my wrongs.

I act in prayer for each person on my list to admit my wrong and amend the harms.

My awareness, acceptance and action in Step Eight prepare me for Step Nine.

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Observations on “thoroughly followed our path” through the first Eight Steps.

1. Steps One through Six are my “spiritual diagnostic”. I am *aware* something is wrong—that I need to be “restored”. I *accept* that I need a “spiritual re-alignment”. I *act* in my self-examination, my inventory, so that God can disclose to me what in me is “spiritually mis-aligned”. My “spiritual mis-alignment” is what keeps me from getting on and staying on my “path” of recovery from alcoholism. I become willing to have my “objectionable things” which are causing my “spiritual mis-alignment” removed.
2. Steps Seven and Eight begin my “spiritual re-alignment” as I become willing to let God remove from me those “wrong” things in me that stand “in the way of my usefulness to [God] and my fellows”. I ask God to help me become willing and able to say “I was wrong”. I become willing and able to prepare to make direct amends to every person I ever harmed.
3. My recovery depends on me “thoroughly” following the Twelve Step “path” of my spiritual awakening. I learn to stop doing the things which block my spiritual awakening from happening to me—such as denying I need spiritual help, being dishonest with myself about myself, blaming others and not taking responsibility for the wrongs I have done.
4. A person wrongs me. I ask God to save me from being angry. I ask God to help me take a kindly and tolerant [forgiving] view of the other person. I “resolutely” look for my own mistakes. I am willing to make amends if needed. I am on my “spiritual path”.
5. God does not expect me to become perfect. God expects me to seek willingness from God to improve. “We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”
6. I ask God in Step Three to relieve me of the “bondage of self”. I admit to God, myself and my “spiritual pathfinder” in Step Five the exact nature (motives) of my wrongs. In Step Eight, I become willing to say “I was wrong” to each person I have harmed. Learning to admit “I am wrong” is a major part of my “spiritual re-alignment”.
7. My willingness to seek God’s help to amend my wrongs reduces my pride and fear.
8. Perhaps the wrong thing I did was unintentional. Even so, if I harmed someone, I am willing to make amends so that I can be free of the “debris” of guilt, regret, remorse and shame.
9. It becomes easier to not do the next wrong thing when I take responsibility for the wrong things I have done.

Next Time: Step Nine—be willing to be accountable to others for harms done.