

Humility - Gratitude - Forgiveness - Responsibility:
Four of the Choices We Make in our Twelve Step Recovery.

A Big Book Study of Spiritual Recovery from Alcoholism
in a Twelve-Step Workshop, from July 1 through September 30, 2024.

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

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

Introduction to the Study.

This study of the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Step recovery program discloses that four of our vital spiritual *choices*, *Humility*, *Gratitude*, *Forgiveness* and *Responsibility*, are an implicit or explicit part of each of the Twelve Steps. I see these as “spiritual choices”, because they seem impossible for self-centered people like me without daily help from a Higher Power.

My choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility enable me to let go of old selfish ideas, old selfish habits and old selfish motives. I become able and willing to seek God’s will instead of my will, beginning with not taking the first drink, one day at a time.

I believe that in the spiritual recovery context each of these is a choice—decisions made not always with complete willingness, or even awareness, but choices nevertheless.

Caution: a choice that seems so awful that I would never make it doesn’t mean that I don’t still have that choice. Even with “our new attitude toward liquor”, we still have the choice.

My spiritual awakening is not what I can do, but what God can do when I choose to ask Him.

These four choices *initiate*, *inform* and *inspire* my relationship with God. These four choices help me become a spiritual, God-centered person. I am not merely trying to do something. *I am trying to receive something—a healthy relationship with God and others.*

The *humility choice*: I need help. I am modest, not prideful or ashamed. I accept myself as I am. I seek God’s will, not my own. I desire to “move out from [myself] toward others and toward God.” (AA 12x12, p. 76)

The *gratitude choice*: I am thankful God gives me awareness, acceptance and action.
I am thankful God removes from me denial, delusion and illusion.

The *forgiveness choice*: I decide to ask God to help me stop hurting myself and others.
I decide to set aside resentments, fears, blame and revenge.

The *responsibility choice*: I decide to ask God to help me respond to situations in a trustworthy manner that helps others as well as myself. I am answerable for my choices.

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Step Two: “**Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**” *Hopeful Choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility.*

Humility Choice: *I need help from a Power greater than me alone.*

“... though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (p. xxxii)

“... willing to believe in a Power greater than myself.” (p. 12)

“*There is a solution* ... accept spiritual help.” (p. 25)

“To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis ...” (p. 44)

“... am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?” (p. 47)

“Faced with alcoholic destruction ... open minded on spiritual matters ...” (p. 48)

“Circumstances made him willing to believe.” (p. 57)

“That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.” (p. 60)

I “come to believe” through hopeful choices that move me from “scoffing” to humble.

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Step Two: “**Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.**” *Hopeful Choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility.*

Gratitude Choice: *There could be help from a Power greater than me.*

- “... God had done for him what he could not do for himself.” (p. 11)
- “Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning.” (p. 12)
- “... atheists or agnostics ... you need not be disconcerted.” (p. 44)
- “... you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (p. 45)
- “... we did not need to consider another’s conception of God.” (p. 46)
- “... willing to believe ... simple cornerstone ... effective spiritual structure ...” (p. 47)
- “That God could and would if He were sought.” (p. 60)

I “come to believe” in hopeful gratitude that a Power greater than me could help me.

Forgiveness Choice: *I can stop blaming myself for not being able to stop on my own.*

- “Scales of pride and prejudice fell from my eyes.” (p. 12)
- “... suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.” (p. 44)
- “... and it had to be a *Power greater than ourselves.*” (p. 45)
- “... lay aside prejudice ... willingness to believe in a Power greater ...” (p. 46)
- “... prejudice you may have against spiritual terms deter you ...” (p. 47)
- “... lay aside prejudice, even against organized religion.” (p. 49)
- “... just as biased and unreasonable about the realm of the spirit ...” (p. 51)

I “come to believe” in hope that my Higher Power helps me forgive my prejudicial judging.

Responsibility Choice: *Now that I know there could be spiritual help, I need to seek it.*

- “... the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady ...” (p. xvi)
- “I simply had to believe in a Spirit of the Universe ...” (p. 10)
- “... face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life—or else.” (p. 44)
- “... we admitted the possible existence of ... a Spirit of the Universe ...” (p. 46)
- “This sort of thinking had to be abandoned.” (p. 48)
- “... we had to stop doubting the power of God.” (p. 52)
- “... fearlessly face the proposition that ... God either is, or He isn’t.” (p. 53)

I “come to believe”, I hope I can be responsible to seek help from a Power greater than me.

I experience God’s care initially in my choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility. God cares about me enough to inform me as to what not to do and what to do. The God of my understanding continues to inspire me to seek His will to know the difference.

God’s disclosures are not always linear or predictable. They are often only visible in hindsight. In seeking God’s help to make my choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility, I become more humble, grateful, forgiving and responsible. My spirit awakens.

Next Time, Step Three: “**The Decision to seek God’s Care of our will and our choices.**”