

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.

With these choices, I cooperate with God in my spiritual awakening. I let God do what only God can do. My spiritual awakening is what God can do with me when I choose to seek God’s care—and help—to initiate, inform and inspire my relationship with God and others.

Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

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)

“That basic ingredient of all humility, a desire to seek and do God’s will ...” (AA 12x12, p. 72)

Our Humility Choice in Step Seven.

“When ready, we say something like this: “My Creator, I am now willing that you should ...” (p. 76)

The “you should” in this prayer represents a change, a growth, in my humility from Step Six to Step Seven. I no longer suffer from the delusion that I don’t need help to be rid of my “objectionable” defects of character. I now accept in more self-honesty that “I can’t—God can—I think I’ll let Him” ... or, “God could, God would, God should.”

(See “(c) That God could and would if He were sought.”, p. 60)

Admitting my wrongs is not enough. I must be willing to “let God” change me.

The Gratitude Choice: I am thankful God gives me awareness, acceptance and action.

I am thankful God removes from me denial, delusion and illusion.

Our Gratitude Choice in Step Seven.

“... have all of me, good and bad.” (p. 76)

*I am grateful for the experience of those who have gone before me in recovery who live in less denial, delusion and illusion to make me aware that God really will “have all of me”. I am grateful I can accept and believe that God can restore me; that I have **faith** in God’s care of restoration. I am grateful I can act to **trust** God enough to take the risk to “let God” have all of me, the part I know about and the parts of me I don’t know about.*

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Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

The Forgiveness Choice: I decide to set aside resentments, fears, blame and revenge.

I decide to ask God to help me stop hurting myself and others.

Our Forgiveness Choice in Step Seven.

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

My character defects were “objectionable” to others before they became objectionable to me. I pray in Step Six for the willingness to “let go” of my character defects that have become objectionable to me. I ask for forgiveness (“God save me from being angry.”. p. 67) I begin to feel “forgivable” for my known character defects in Step Six.

However, I am unable to foresee which of my “objectionable” character defects are the ones God sees as most standing in the way of my usefulness to God and others.

In Step Seven, I ask to “let God” forgive me for the character defects God believes are standing in the way of my usefulness to God and others. In Step Six, I pray to feel forgiven for the known. In Step Seven, I pray to “let God” forgive me for the unknown.

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.

Our Responsibility Choice in Step Seven.

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.” (p. 76)

I am responsible for my part in my relationship with God. My part in my relationship with God ALWAYS includes my asking God for help.

I trust God to remove from me what in me blocks me from doing God’s will “as I go out from here”. The next “as I go out from here” are Steps Eight and Nine. In those Steps, I will “let God” grant me “strength ... to do [God’s] bidding”: to be willing to be responsible for my wrongs and accountable to amend the harms I have done to others; have a helpful and forgiving spirit; a desire to “let God” reduce my fear, guilt, regret, remorse and shame.

I act responsibly in Step Seven. I specifically ask God for spiritual strength to empower me to carry out God’s will for me in whatever my next relationship, situation or circumstance may be. I “let God” give me the spiritual care and strength I need to do God’s “bidding”.

Next Time, Step Eight: The Willingness Choices to be Responsible for Harms Done.