

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 Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

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 Choices in Step Nine.

“... more action, without which we find that ‘Faith without works is dead.’ ” (p. 76)

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

“... demonstration of good will ... convictions with tact and common sense.” “

“... lose our fear of creditors ...” (p. 78)

“... go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience ...” (p. 79)

“... asked God to help ... place the outcome in God’s hands ...” (p. 80)

“We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble ...” (p. 83)

I choose to ask God to grant me a humble attitude and behavior in my Step Nine amends.

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 Choices in Step Nine.

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed ... made it when we took inventory ... we attempt to sweep away the debris ... of our effort to live on self-will ...” (p. 76)

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

“As God’s people, we stand on our own feet; we don’t crawl before anyone.” (p. 83)

I choose to be grateful that God grants me strength to act on my Step Nine amends.

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Step Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

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 Choices in Step Nine.

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

“We go to him [the man we hated] in a helpful and forgiving spirit ...” “

“His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own.” (p. 78)

“... admitting his [own] faults and asking forgiveness.” (p. 79)

“... good sense and loving kindness ... the other one’s happiness ...” (p. 82)

“... Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.” (p. 83)

*I ask God to grant me a “helpful and forgiving spirit”. I **choose** to forgive and feel forgiven.*

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 Choices in Step Nine.

“Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past.” (p. 76)

“We attempt to sweep away the debris ... self-will and run the show ourselves.” “

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

“... sincere desire to set right the wrong.” “

“We are there to sweep off our side of the street ...” “

“We do not dodge our creditors.” (p. 78)

“... we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing ...” (p. 79)

“... we are willing ... admitting his [own] faults ...” “

“... we have no right to involve another person.” (p. 81)

“We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.” (p. 82)

“Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead.” (p. 83)

“The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*” “

*I **choose** to be responsible to ask for God’s strength to make my direct amends with humility, gratitude and forgiveness.*

*I **choose** to be responsible to ask for God’s strength to accept the outcome of each of my direct amends.*

With the care and help of God’s strength, I am responsible and accountable in my amends.

I set aside whatever resentments and suffering I feel because of others.

I forgive those who have harmed me.

I do not evade any of my direct amends because of my fear of what “they” may say or do.

I do not postpone my direct amends due to my pride keeping me from admitting my wrongs.

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**Observations: Our Four Choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility,
as viewed through the Promises following Steps Three, Five and Nine.**

“When we sincerely took such a position ...” (p. 63)

The “position” was to “quit playing God” (p. 62 with the *humility, gratitude, forgiveness* and *responsibility choices* I became aware of, accepted and acted on based on the information I received in Steps One and Two. The promises on p. 63 are written in the past tense, based on the experience of those who went before us in recovery who **chose** to experience the **Presence** of God.

“Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted.” (p. 75)

Through my first five steps, my **choices** of *humility, gratitude, forgiveness* and *responsibility* enable me to admit some uncomfortable truth about myself, including my “character defects and the harms I have done to others. I have become aware of, accepted and acted on my need to trust another person. My **choices** have enabled me to “feel” and experience the **Power** of God.

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed ...” (p. 83)

Through my first nine steps, my **choices** of *humility, gratitude, forgiveness* and *responsibility* enable me to seek, receive and use God’s care in the form of God’s “Power”, God’s “Love” and God’s strength. (See p. 63, p. 76) I have become willing to “let go” and “let God” help me. I have begun to live God’s “Way of life”. I no longer live in the illusion that I have no shortcomings and that self-reliance is all I need. I no longer live in the delusion that my life is not unmanageable. I am beginning to experience and believe in the **Promises** of God’s care (see p. 63).

These promises are “conditional”. I participate with God in my “spiritual awakening”.

Note in these promises the conditions: “when we”; “once we”; “if we”.

These promises are “personal”. Each of our personal “spiritual awakenings” are unique.

We grow in our individual belief, faith and trust at different rates, degrees and depth.

These promises are “incremental”. I “come to believe” in God in Steps One, Two and

Three. I develop faith in God’s care in Steps Four and Five. I am willing to trust in God’s care in Steps Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. I live with less guilt, regret, remorse, shame and fear. I live with more happiness, joy and freedom from my “bondage of self”.

Choosing *humility, gratitude, forgiveness* and *responsibility* in Steps One through Nine enables me to let God help me “get right” with God, to “get right” with myself and to “set things right” with my fellows.

Next Time, Step Ten: Using our “Four Choices” to enlarge our Spiritual Life each day.