

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 Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (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)

Our Humility Choices in Step Six.

“... we ask if we have omitted anything?” *Have I lied?* (p. 75)

“Is our work solid so far?” *Have I told the truth?* “

“Are the stones properly in place?” *Have I admitted my motives?* “

“Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?” *Have I told partial truth?* “

“Have we tried to make mortar without sand?” *Have I omitted prayer?* “

“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six.” (p. 76)

I transition from Step Five into Step Six with the humble choice to be more open to the truth about myself. I ask God for willingness to have “fearlessness and honesty”. (see p. 73)

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 Six.

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.” (p. 76)

“*It was only a matter of being willing to believe ... complete willingness ...*” (p. 12)

“... became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away ...” (p. 13)

“I expressed my entire willingness ...” “

“... willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ...” (p. 46)

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

I choose to be grateful for the reassuring examples of willingness of those who have gone before me with awareness, acceptance and action. I am grateful to God for granting me the willingness to pray to “let go” of my “objectionable things”.

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Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (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 Six.

“Are we now ready to let God remove from us ...” (p. 76)

I decide to seek forgiveness for not being able to “wish [my character defects] away” by myself “any more than alcohol”. (See p. 66)

“... all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?” (p. 76)

I have experienced forgiveness for my “objectionable things” from the person who listened to my Fifth Step. I decide to feel “forgivable” for my defects of character. My guilt, regret, remorse and shame for my character defects continue to lessen.

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 Six.

“Can He now take them all—everyone?” (p. 76)

I am responsible to choose in faith that God can remove my “objectionable things” from me. I trust that God’s care is stronger than my “objectionable” defects of character.

“If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.” “

I am responsible to choose to ask God for the willingness to “let go” of my “objectionable things”. Admitting my wrongs is not enough. I must be willing to change.

Observations.

The power of self-deception is terrible. My self-deception is reduced in Steps One through Six with my choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility. In these steps, God gives me awareness, acceptance and action to reduce my self-deceptive delusions:

Humility. I become aware of my powerlessness and unmanageability.

I *accept* my need for spiritual help.

I *act* in prayer, writing and sharing to “move out from [myself]” to God’s care.

Gratitude. I am aware of the willingness example of those who have gone before me.

I gratefully *accept* my need to seek God’s care, with the help of others.

I *act* in gratitude to discover what in me blocks me from God’s care.

Forgiveness. I am aware of my need to forgive in place of anger and resentment.

I *accept* that I need God’s help to forgive and feel forgiven.

I *act* in writing, prayer and sharing to forgive and feel forgiven.

Responsibility. I am aware of my responsibility to cooperate with God in my recovery.

I *accept* that my spiritual awakening requires responsibility on my part.

I *act* responsibly to “let go” of my “objectionable” character defects.

Next Time, Step Seven: The Willingness Choices to “Let God” remove our shortcomings.