

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

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

I *humbly* decide to take this “action” in faith that God will provide me the “strength”. I desire to “do God’s will”, or God’s “bidding”, as it is called in Step Seven. I accept there is action to be taken that requires me to be willing to act with “faith”. *Before I even know what this next spiritual action is, I am willing to “move out from myself” to do it.*

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 Eight.

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed ... we made it when we took inventory.” (p. 76)

I am *grateful* in Step Eight that I have written down the names of many of the people I have harmed when I wrote my Step Four lists. By now, I am aware and accept that there are people I have harmed and to whom I owe amends. *I am grateful I have God’s strength to act in faith as I pray for the willingness to make my direct amends. I act to ask God help me amend my relationship with others. As I do, I “grow with God”.*

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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)

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 Eight.

“... and to whom we are willing to make amends ... it was agreed at the beginning we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.” (p. 76)

Many of the people on my Step Eight list did harm to me, as well. *I ask God for help:*

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

“... resentment ... fatal ... shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit.” “

“... we had to be free of anger.” “

“... people ... dominated us ... wrong-doing of others ... power to actually kill.” “

“... the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick.” “

“We asked God to help us show them ... tolerance, pity, and patience ...” (p. 67)

“God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.” “

“We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ...” “

I begin to ask God for help to forgive others with these prayers in Step Four. When I reach Step Eight, I have already received help from God to have “a helpful and forgiving spirit”.

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 Eight.

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

I am aware that I haven’t the will yet to make amends to some people on my list.

I accept that I need to keep asking God for “the will to do this ... until it comes”.

I act responsibly as I continue to ask God for the will to make amends “until it comes”.

I am responsible for asking God to grant me the strength, the willingness and the forgiveness necessary to make amends to every person on my Step Eight list. As I do, my pride, fear, inconsideration, guilt, regret, remorse and shame continue to “melt away”.

Observation. I prayed in Step Three for God’s care. I have blocked God’s care from my life by holding onto resentments and fears toward others. I am responsible to forgive others—and to amend the wrongs and harms I have done to others. In Step Eight, I continue to seek God’s strength for the willingness to let go of my resentments and fears of others. I am responsible to forgive and make amends.

Next Time, Step Nine: The Purposeful Choices to be Accountable for our Wrongs.