

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 my 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.

Review. My **choices** of *Humility*, *Gratitude*, *Forgiveness* and *Responsibility* in Steps One through Eleven enable my “**real purpose**”—“to fit [myself] to be of maximum service to God and the people about [me]” (p. 77). I try to live by “our **code**” of “love and tolerance of others”.

My *initial* healthy relationship with God and others grows. I am spiritually *informed* and *inspired*.

Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve.

I **choose** God’s help each day with *Humility*, *Gratitude*, *Forgiveness* and *Responsibility* to “continue” to live within healthy limitations for me with Step Ten; to “seek” God’s inspiration and intuitive thoughts with Step Eleven; to “try” to practice spiritual principles in Step Twelve.

My real purpose, my code and Step Twelve all guide me to let God help me serve others.

Step Twelve-Part 3: “... and [we tried] to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (p. 60)
“**Act**”: We try to use our Four Choices in All our Affairs, in every Relationship.

*This part of Step Twelve, to try to practice the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps in all our affairs, is the daily application of our **purpose** and our **code** in every relationship we have:*

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

“The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*” (p. 83)

“Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (p. 84)

“**Love**” is a decision here, not an emotion. I “choose” to want God’s best for others.

“**Tolerance**” is an action here, not a desire. I “choose” to stop judging and blaming.

*The **Four Choices** of **Humility**, **Gratitude**, **Forgiveness** and **Responsibility** enable us to live out our purpose and our code “in all our affairs”. Today, we look at Humility choices in Chapter Eight, Gratitude choices in Chapter Nine, Forgiveness choices in Chapter Ten and Responsibility choices in Chapter Eleven in Alcoholics Anonymous.*

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*Opportunities to use my Four Choices to fulfill my **purpose** and live in my **code** run through “all my affairs”, my relationship with others, as I become aware, accept and act.*

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

“Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (p. 84)

Here, we look at Humility Choices in Chapter Eight, Gratitude Choices in Chapter Nine, Forgiveness Choices in Chapter Ten and Responsibility Choices in Chapter Eleven.

“Chapter 8, TO WIVES”

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)

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

My humility choices change my attitude about my relationship between God and I.

“... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.” (p. 104)

“If God could solve ... riddle of alcoholism, He can solve your problems, too.” (p. 116)

“But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God.” “

“... place the problem, along with everything else, in God’s hands.” (p. 120)

“Chapter 9, THE FAMILY AFTERWARD”

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

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

My gratitude choices change my attitude about my circumstances—not my circumstances!

“All members ... the common ground of tolerance, understanding and love.” (p. 122)

“... in God’s hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have ...” (p. 124)

“... material well-being always followed spiritual progress ...” (p. 127)

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.” (p. 133)

“Chapter 10, TO EMPLOYERS”

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.

My forgiveness choices change my attitude about others—without needing to change them!

“... a situation which might be helped by better understanding all around.” (p. 137)

“And we, who have imposed ... [can’t] blame them if they have been short with us.” (p. 138)

“If you concede that your employee is ill, can he be forgiven ...” (p. 140)

“... if he knows you understand ... not be upset by anything he wishes to say ...” (p. 145)

“Chapter 11, A VISION FOR YOU”

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.

My responsibility choices change my attitude about my purpose—to serve God and others.

“Have you a sufficient substitute? Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than
that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous.” (p. 152)

“... escape disaster together ... common journey ... Love thy neighbor as thyself.” (p. 153)

“... tapped a source of power much greater than yourself.” (p. 163)

“See to it that your relationship with [God] is right, and great events will come to
pass for you and countless others ... as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.” (p. 164)

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Observations on our Four Choices, our Purpose, our Code and our Spiritual Awakening.

1. My spirit awakened with a difficult *choice*: "... to be doomed ... or to live ... " (p. 45)
My spiritual awakening grew with a simple *choice*: "God either is, or He isn't." (p. 53)
I grow spiritually when I *choose* to ask God to "relieve me of the bondage of self". (p. 63)
2. I am *aware* of the vital life-giving, life-saving nature of my spiritual awakening today.
I *accept* my need to stay on my spiritual path and try to enlarge my spiritual life today.
I desire to *act* with healthy choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility.
3. I am *aware* of how I feel. I *accept* what I feel. I *act* with healthy choices with God's help.
4. *Humility* makes me *aware* of the limits of self-reliance and *accept* my need for God's help.
5. I am *grateful* for God's Power in my life to help me *act* with healthy limits on my self-reliance.
6. God helps me to *forgive* others and to stop resenting and blaming others for their faults.
7. God helps me be *responsible* to be, and do, my part, leaving others free to do their part.
8. When I am trying to live in God's will for me, my healthy choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility appear on the outside as my fitness to be of maximum service to God and others.
9. When I am trying to live in God's will for me, my healthy choices of Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility motivate me from the inside to love and tolerate others.
10. With our *primary purpose*, I am letting God "fit myself to be of maximum service".
11. With our *code*, I seek God's will and God's Power to help me love and tolerate all others.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, I learn how to let go of my obsession to explain uncertainty and my delusion that I can control uncertainty.
I do not want to live a self-obsessed, fearful life, separated from God and other people.

I have learned to *humbly* choose to desire and seek God's help in every area of my life.
I have learned to be *grateful* to God for helping me in all circumstances, good and bad.
I have learned to choose to *forgive* others, especially when I don't want to forgive them.
I have learned to be *responsible* for my choices and their consequences.

I have a desire today to live a God-centered life with purpose: to serve God and others.
I have a desire today to live a God-centered life, with love and tolerance of others.

"Abandon yourself to God as you understand God ... give freely of what you find ..."

Next time, A New Twelve-Step study begins: "From Powerless to Liberating Abandon".