

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 Ten enable my “**real purpose**”—“to fit [myself] to be of maximum service to God and the people about [me]” (p. 77). I begin 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*.

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

I complete my direct amends in Step Nine *to make peace with my past.*

I make “living amends” each day with Step Ten as part of *living at peace in the present.*

“... grow in understanding and effectiveness ... continue to watch for ...” (p. 84)

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 with Step Ten; “seek” God’s inspiration with Step Eleven; “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.**

I “continue” all day in Step Ten to watch for, and deal with, those things in me that block me from God’s care. God’s Love and Strength help me treat others with “love and tolerance”.

I “sense the flow of His Spirit into [me] ... become God-conscious ... sixth sense.” (p. 85)

Step Eleven: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we *understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” (p. 59)

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from [God] ... but we must go further and that means more action ... *Step Eleven* ...” (p. 85)

I “seek” knowledge of God’s will for me and the power to carry that out with Step Eleven.

Choosing Responsibility, Humility, Gratitude and Forgiveness in Steps Ten and Eleven inspire

my “purpose” and my “code”—fit “to be of maximum service to God and others”.

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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 Eleven.

"When we retire at night, we constructively review our day ... not to drift ..." (p. 86)

"On awakening ... we consider our plans for the day." "

"In thinking about our day, we may face indecision ... not be able to determine ..." "

"We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer ..." (p. 87)

"... we ask [others] to join us in morning meditation." "

"As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful ..." "

I "seek" to grow conscious contact with God with responsible, directed prayer and meditation.

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)

Our Humility Choices in Step Eleven.

"[Prayer and meditation] work, if we have the proper attitude and work at it." (p. 86)

"Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?" "

"Have we ... were we ... what could we ... were we ... were we ...?" "

"... we ask God to direct our thinking ... divorced from [selfish, dishonest] motives." "

"... we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision." (p. 86)

"... that we be given whatever we need ... for freedom from self-will ..." (p. 87)

"... ask for the right thought or action ... no longer running the show ..." (pp. 87-88)

I "seek" to do God's will, to humbly move out from myself toward others and towards God.

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 Eleven.

"... kind and loving toward all ... do for others ... pack into the stream of life?" (p. 86)

"... employ our mental faculties with assurance ... the right answers come ..." "

"... thinking will ... be ... more and more on the plane of inspiration." (p. 87)

"We are then in much less danger ... do not tire ... so we let God ..." (p. 88)

I "seek" with gratitude to enjoy God's guidance, and limitations, in my thinking and actions.

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 Eleven.

"Do we owe an apology?" "Were we kind and loving toward all?" (p. 86)

"... we ask God's forgiveness ... what corrective measures should be taken." "

"So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined." (See p. 67) (p. 88)

I "seek" with a forgiving spirit and attitude to treat myself and others with "love and tolerance".

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Observations about the Power of AA's Step Eleven "Directed Meditation and Prayer".

1. I have become "God-conscious, with a spiritual "sixth sense". I **choose** to practice these directed "meditations" and "prayers" "when [I] retire"; "on awakening"; "through the day".
2. I **choose** to practice these directed, simple "meditations" and "prayers" and become more conscious of God. I *seek* to keep God in the center of my life and in all my relationships.
3. I receive my spiritual awakening as a privilege—as a gift from God. In my quiet times with God and in my pauses with God throughout my day, I try to listen to God as well as speak to God. I am *responsible* to practice keeping my gift from God "unwrapped" at all times.
4. My Step Eleven "*practice*" of my "sixth sense", spiritually awakened "God-consciousness" is done as *continuously* as I can throughout each day until it becomes my *habit*.
5. I *responsibly* seek to follow the Step Eleven "suggestions". Even my *motives*, as well as my feelings, thoughts, words and actions, are improved with *humility, gratitude and forgiveness*.
6. "We are not cured ..." (p. 85). My worst enemy is not temptation, but my complacency. Complacency is the door through which my unguided self-will allows temptation to enter.
7. My daily spiritual living cycle: Step Ten helps me stay out of God's way so God can use Step Eleven to guide and direct me to seek to do things God's Way!
8. I no longer pray to "get my way". I pray to get God's help to see, do and accept God's Way.
9. With my daily **choices** of *Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility*, I *continue* to seek knowledge of God's will for [me] and the power to carry that out. I am more *aware* of and *accepting* of what I do not know, while *acting* on what God "discloses" to me that day.
10. Step Eleven further grows my spiritual *awareness*, my spiritual *sixth sense*. With more spiritual *awareness*, my *acceptance* grows in terms of "love and tolerance" and my *actions* become more centered in "maximum service to God and the people about [me]".
11. In Step Seven I pray "Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding."
In Step Eleven I pray "Thy will be done". Even so, these two prayers are not "absolutes". I am grateful to God and AA "we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection"!
12. **Choosing** *Humility, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Responsibility* in Steps One through Eleven allows God to "restore me", as I experience less resistance to "Thy will be done."

Next Time, Step Twelve, Part One: The Choice to "Be Aware" of our Spiritual Awakening.