

The Promises of the Twelve Steps: Our Proof of Spiritual Progress.

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve-Step Study Workshop-
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at noon CST from January 6 through March 31, 2025
Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, MO

(All page numbers cited are from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.)

Study Overview.

This study of the Twelve Steps will cover each Step as presented in Alcoholics Anonymous. We will “look back” from the Promises on page 63 to the very beginning of the book to see how our Spiritual Progress begins in Steps One, Two and Three.

We will discover on pp. 63 to 75 how our Spiritual Progress continues up to the Promises on page 75 with Steps Four and Five.

We will discover on pages 75 to 84 how our Spiritual Progress continues up to the Promises on page 84 with Steps Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.

We will discover on pages 84 to 164 how our Spiritual Progress grows even more with the Promises of Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve.

We will conclude the series on March 31 with a “Thread of Recovery” of Prayers and Promises that illuminate and disclose the Proof of our Spiritual Progress in our recovery.

Study Schedule.

January 6.	Step One.	“... we became less and less interested in ourselves ...”	(p. 63)
January 13.	Step Two.	“As we felt new power flow in ...”	(p. 63)
January 20.	Step Three.	“We had a new Employer.”	(p. 63)
January 27.	Step Four.	“... withholding nothing, we are delighted.”	(p. 75)
February 3.	Step Five.	“... now we begin to have a spiritual experience.”	(p. 75)
February 10.	Step Six.	“... lose interest in selfish things ... interest in our fellows.”	(p. 84)
February 17.	Step Seven.	“... know a new freedom and a new happiness.”	(p. 84)
February 24.	Step Eight.	“We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.”	(p. 84)
March 3.	Step Nine.	“Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.”	(p. 84)
March 10.	Step Ten.	“... we have ceased fighting anything or anyone ...”	(p. 84)
March 17.	Step Eleven.	“...our thinking ... more on the plane of inspiration.”	(p. 87)
March 24.	Step Twelve.	“... great events will come to pass for you and ... others.”	(p. 164)
March 31.	Review.	“We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”	(p. 60)

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Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (p. 59)

In our text book Alcoholics Anonymous, the “Big Book”, the Promises that introduce, and induce, us into taking our Step Three Prayer include this promise:
“... we became less and less interested in ourselves ...” (p. 63)

*This promise does not seem desirable at first. However, it turns out to be a necessity! In the Big Book chapters “The Doctor’s Opinion”, “Bill’s Story”, “There is a Solution”, “More About Alcoholism” and “We Agnostics”, **becoming less interested in ourselves is proof** that I am beginning to make spiritual progress in my recovery from alcoholism.*

In the beginning of my recovery in AA, I did not realize how self-centered I was. I thought my problem was alcohol, not “self-will run riot” (see p. 62). For over twenty years of drinking, alcohol seemed to be the *solution* to my problems. I lived in my *obsession* of self-reliance, my *illusion* of control and my *delusion* that my life was not unmanageable.

Only when I finally had my “page 152 experience” on March 18, 1981 and took my last drink had I become desperate enough to try to let AA help me with my “problem”:
“Then he will know loneliness such as few do.” (p. 152)

It is an irony that extreme self-centeredness such as mine could produce a life of such loneliness. Before I could become open to learn to live a life of service to God and others, I had to suffer all the pain, loss and desperation of living in my lonely self-centered world.

My spiritual progress began when I became able to look, and listen, for help beyond myself in those early AA meetings. I heard members say things from the Big Book which began to bring me hope for me of the promise of “we became less and less interested in ourselves”:

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol.” (p. xxviii)

The more I drank to feel “part of”, the more alone I became.
“He frankly admitted and believed that for him there was no hope.” (p. xxxi)

After twenty years of drinking and losing almost everything, I felt hopeless and alone.
“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in ... self-pity.” (p. 8)

My last months of my self-centered drinking were the most miserable and lonely of my life.
“... business associates remained skeptical ... waves of self-pity and resentment.” (p. 15)

I was not able to drink with them ... I was so self-conscious before and after I quit!
“His will power must be weak. He could stop if he wanted to.” (p. 20)

People would say this about me. I wanted to isolate— and fight them—at the same time,
“... except liquor ... in that respect he is incredibly dishonest and selfish.” (p. 21)

I isolated from others so I could drink more. I drank so much no one wanted me around.
“... we were alcoholics ... delusion that we are like other people ... has to be smashed.” (p. 30)

My relationships centered on me becoming what I thought they wanted—hiding the real me.
“We were having trouble with personal relationships ...” (p. 52)

I was living as a liar, a thief and a fraud. I was unable to become less interested in myself.
“Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power. We had to have God’s help.” (p. 62)

Next Time, Step Two: “As we felt new power flow in ...”