

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 and Spiritual Progress.

This study of the Twelve Steps covers each Step as presented in Alcoholics Anonymous. We begin with a “look back” from the promises on p. 63 to the very beginning of the book to see the proof of our spiritual progress in Steps One, Two and Three.

We then discover on pp. 63 to 75 how our spiritual progress continues up to the proof of the promises on p. 75 with Steps Four and Five.

We will discover on pp. 75 to 84 how our spiritual progress proceeds even further up to the proof of the promises on pp. 83-84 with Steps Six, Seven, Eight and Nine.

We will further discover on pp. 84 to 164 how our spiritual progress grows even more with the proof of 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.

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

(p. 59)

“We will not regret the past ...”

(p. 84)

So far, we have claimed these promises as some of our proof of our spiritual progress:

in Step One, we “became less interested in ourselves”;

in Step Two, we “felt new power flow in”;

in Step Three, we “had a new Employer”;

in Step Four, we began “withholding nothing”;

in Step Five, we withheld nothing to “begin to have a spiritual experience”;

In Step Six, we “lose interest in selfish things”;

in Step Seven, God’s “strength” gave us “a new freedom and a new happiness”.

Following Step Seven, God’s “bidding” for me is to leave my “self-will run riot” past behind me—more relief from my “bondage of self”. Step Eight prepares me for Step Nine.

*In Step Eight, I ask God for strength to complete my list of people I harmed and pray for willingness to be responsible to amend the wrong(s) I did to them. God helps me set aside my pride and fear. **I write. I pray.** Guilt, regret, remorse and shame begin to melt away.*

I begin to claim my promise to “not regret the past” as proof of my spiritual progress.

Step Eight: “We have a list of all persons we have harmed ... when we took inventory.”

(p. 76)

“If we haven’t the will to [repair the damage done in the past] we ask until it comes.” “

I was preparing for Step Eight during my Step Four inventories:

“... our list ... admitted our wrongs ... willing to set these matters straight.”

(p. 67)

“We put [our fears] on paper ... we ask Him to remove our fear ... what He would have us be ... at once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

(p. 68)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate ... we got this all down on paper ... be willing to make amends where we have done harm ...”

(p. 69)

“We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.”

(p. 70)

I cannot live in God’s will in the present until I let God’s strength free me from my past!

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(p. 59)

“We will not regret the past ...”

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“We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.” (p. 164)

Step Eight has a surprising “disclosure” for me—my spiritual opportunity to gain my freedom from the “debris” of my “self-will run riot” past. Step Eight helps me grow my relationship with God! I ask God for more willingness, because without God’s strength to give me sufficient willingness, I am unable on my own un-aided will to take responsibility for the harm my wrongs caused others. I will not become free from the “debris” of my past.

I ask God for help and strength. I act, I “work”, to do the two things Step Eight asks of me:

1. Make a list.

I add names to my list of names from Step Four. I am as thorough as I can be, adding names from my entire life, no matter how trivial the harm. I am *uncertain* how this is going to help me “not regret the past”, but I am *certain* in my trust in God and AA.

I make a second column next to my list of names. I complete this sentence for each name: “I was wrong when I ...” I take responsibility for each wrong and harm I did due to my anger, impatience, lying, cheating, stealing, blaming and inconsideration.

2. Ask God in prayer for the willingness to make amends to those I have harmed.

I make a third “willingness” column. I ask God to grant me the willingness, name by name—until the willingness comes—to make direct amends to each person

Here is one of the greatest mysteries of my spiritual awakening. I become willing, with the help of God’s strength, to take responsibility for the wrongs done and harms caused to others. I set aside my pride and fear about going to those I harmed and admitting my wrongdoing.

I experience relief, the “melting away”, of life-long feelings of guilt, regret, remorse and shame!

My attitude changes. I am more forgiving of them. My uncertainty about what will happen during the direct amend is replaced with the certainty that God’s strength will sustain me.

I prepare to “repair the damage done in the past”, to “sweep away [my] debris” of my life lived on “self-will”. I claim my promise to “not regret the past” as proof of my spiritual progress.

Observations on Step Eight and “We will not regret the past”.

1. God’s “bidding” for me is not always what I expect. God’s bidding is always good for me.
2. The consequences of God’s will for me are often surprising—and always for my benefit!
3. Making amends to others for my wrongs seems impossible. With God’s strength, it isn’t.
4. In Step Eight, my desire to “do it my way” is replaced with willingness to do it God’s Way.
5. In Step Eight, God helps me become willing to do what I don’t want to do—and to do it!
6. In Step Eight, I trust God to grant me willingness to “pocket my pride” and set aside my fear.
7. Having less pride and fear, and less guilt, regret, remorse and shame, is spiritual progress.
8. In Step Eight. I take a risk in the direction of God’s will for me, placing my trust in God.
9. In Step Eight, I hope to get relief from my past. I trust God to prepare me to make amends.
10. God’s strength may not change “them”, but it changes my attitude about “them” and me!

Next Time, Step Nine: “Fear of people ... will leave us.”