

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.

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”.

Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.”

(p. 59)

“We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.”

(p. 83)

“When ready, we say something like this: ‘My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.

Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.’ “

(p. 76)

Humility: desire to seek and do God’s will; move out from ourselves toward others and God.

“When ready”: I am willing to “abandon myself utterly” to God—“all of me, good and bad”.

The promises in my first six steps are humble proof of my spiritual progress. God’s caring “Power, Love and Way of life” *work in me* in Steps One through Six to *free me* from my self-centered, “self-will run riot” life. I admit my “objectionable things” that block me from God.

*With Step Seven, I **pray** to claim my promise to live in a God-centered life with “a new freedom and a new happiness”.*

I pray in three stages. First, I ask God for help before I believe God listens. Second, I ask God for help when I believe God listens but before I’m sure God will act to help me. Third, I ask God for help in belief God listens and in faith God will help me but still learning to trust God with the uncertainty of how or when God will help me. *This third stage of prayer is Step Seven:*

My obsession with myself, and alcohol, is replaced by my belief in God’s Power.

My illusion that I can control drinking, and life, is replaced with faith in God’s care.

My delusion that my life is not unmanageable is replaced with trust in God’s will.

I now believe in God’s Power. I now have faith in God’s Love. I trust God’s will in my uncertainty.

With Step Seven, I trust my uncertainty with the certainty that God’s will is good for me.

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I am now willing to “let God” have “all of me, good and bad” (including my “objectionables”):

I trust God’s caring strength to replace my anger and resentments with forgiveness;

I trust God’s caring strength to replace my fears with hope in God’s will and God’s Way;

I trust God’s caring strength to replace my inconsideration of others with love and tolerance.

I am willing to “let God” decide what defects of character (including my “objectionable” things) to remove, and when, so I can be useful to God and others on God’s terms, not mine:

I trust God and hope that God will help me change my dishonesty, denial and delusions into honesty; change my judgment into forgiveness; my envy into respect; my jealousy into gratitude; change my blame into forgiveness; my sarcasm into kindness.

I pray for God’s strength all day every day so that I may be able to live in God’s will for me:

God’s strength gives me what I need to live one day at a time in God’s “Way of life”;

God’s strength replaces my dread of the unknown with joy in trusting God with uncertainty;

God’s strength, with God’s Power and God’s Love, makes me comfortable with differences.

Now, I reflect further upon the three parts of this final request of our Step Seven prayer:

“Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.” (p. 76)

With “grant me strength”, I claim my promises of trust and hope as proof of my spiritual progress. With my un-aided will and strength, I am unable to “let go” of my known objectionable things. With my un-aided will and strength, I am unable to live with trust and hope in the uncertainty of the unknowns of God’s “bidding”—God’s will for me.

Also, “as I go out from here” means I ask God to “grant me strength” every day.

Further, by committing to do God’s “bidding”—God’s will for me— I have finally gone to work for my “new Employer” in trust and hope, not in fear. (See Step Three, p. 63)

“As I go out from here” takes me at once into Steps Eight and Nine, where I will leave my self-centered past behind. Free of the “debris” of my past, I will be better able to “do God’s bidding” as I try to carry the message of my recovery and practice these spiritual principles.

I am willing to take the risk of trusting and hoping in God’s “Way of life”, God’s will, for me.

I claim my promise of “a new freedom”. I live in and trust God’s will, not my “bondage of self”.

I claim my promise of “a new happiness”. I have hope to do God’s bidding of service to others.

My promises of “new freedom and a new happiness” are humble proof of my spiritual progress.

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Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.” (p. 59)
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Observations on Experience, Strength and Hope—and Trust.

1. My *experience* can be summed up in three parts:
 - (a) I can’t drink;
 - (b) I can’t stop drinking on my own;
 - (c) I need spiritual help to stop drinking and live sanely and serenely without alcohol.
2. My *strength* can be summed up in three parts:
 - (a) My own strength is not enough;
 - (b) I first found strength in the presence and power of fellow members in recovery;
 - (c) I find strength today in my belief, faith, trust and hope in God’s will, not in my will alone.
3. My *hope* can be summed up in three parts:
 - (a) I hope God is;
 - (b) I hope God can;
 - (c) I hope God will.
4. I have learned to live in awe of the *life-saving* and *life-shaping* “Way of life” I have been given through the promises of the Power, Love and care of God *as I understand God*.
5. God’s “care” of me with God’s will in the center of my life is a better “Way of life” for me than my way was for me. God-centered, my life is based on **trust** and filled with **hope**.
6. To learn to **trust** God’s care, I first had to “quit playing God”. I had to “let go” of my *illusion* that I was in control—and my *need* to be in control—of alcohol, my life and other people.
7. I **trust** God’s will, God’s “Way of life”, is better for me than my illusory need for control.
8. I **trust** God’s will for me even when I don’t know what all of God’s will is, or will be, for me. I **hope** that God’s will for me is best for me even when it doesn’t make sense to me!
9. My **hope** in **trusting God’s will for me** is the **promise** of “a new freedom” from my “bondage of self” and “a new happiness”, and joy, in God’s will for me, **proof** of my spiritual **progress**.
10. “I am now willing” to “let God” have my objectionable things, plus all of my “good and bad”.
I *trust* that God’s strength will help me stop feeling, thinking and doing objectionable things.
I *trust* that God’s strength will help me be willing to try to do God’s will in all things. (p. 77)
I *hope* that God’s strength will stop me from being a source of dis-harmony. (pp. 76-83)
I *hope* that with God’s strength, I can contribute to harmony in my relationships. (pp. 84-88)

Next Time, Step Eight: “We will not regret the past ...”