

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 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”.

Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (p. 59)

As we “look back” on Steps Six through Nine from the promises on pp. 83-84, we gratefully realize in Step Six that we can claim more promises as proof of our spiritual progress, i.e., “**we will lose interest in selfish things**”. *Am I “entirely ready” to do this?*

This promise, along with virtually all others in Alcoholics Anonymous, is conditional:

“**If** we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be

amazed ... will always materialize **if** we work for them.” (Bold type mine) (pp. 83-84)

Am I “entirely ready” to be “painstaking”, to “work” (*pray*) in Step Six? Am I seeking spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection? Have I answered the questions on p. 75?

“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at *Step Six*. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.” (p. 76)

Step Six begins as we answer “to our satisfaction” the questions following Step Five: (p. 75)

“... we ask [God] if we have omitted anything ...?” *Have I omitted prayer?*

“Is our work solid so far?” *Have I told the truth?*

“Are the stones properly in place?” *Have I lied?”*

“Have we skimmed on the cement ... in the foundation?” *Have I told partial truth?*

“Have we tried to make mortar without sand?” *Have I admitted motives?*

Am I willing to ask God for willingness—to claim my promise to “lose interest in selfish things”?

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Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (p. 59)
“We will lose interest in selfish things ...” (p. 84)

In Step Three, I ask God to relieve me of the bondage of self. I need spiritual help to live free of my obsessions, illusions and delusions. My resentment, fear and sexual conduct inventories in Steps Four and Five disclose my character defects that block me from God’s care and help. Am I willing to learn to live without these “objectionable” defects of character—to claim my promise to “lose interest in selfish things” as proof of my spiritual progress?

I answer the questions on p. 75. Now I ask myself, how “indispensable” is willingness?

“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself.” (p. 12)

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (p. 30)

“... express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ...” (p. 46)

“... if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway.” (p. 55)

“Circumstances made him willing ... God restored us all ...” (p. 57)

“Willingness, honesty and open mindedness are the essentials of recovery.” (p. 568)

Am I willing, “now ready”, to “lose interest in selfish things”, to “let God remove from [me] all the [character defects] which [I] have admitted are objectionable?”

I know I am powerless to “remove”—stop doing—these “objectionable things” on my own power alone. When I think I can change them or remove them on my own, my life actually becomes more unmanageable. I block myself from God’s care and help. I fail to hold on to, or continue to claim, the promises of Steps One and Two!

Am I willing to believe that God can “take them all—every one”?

“(c) That God could and would if He were sought.” (“... we were at Step Three”.) (p. 60)

The question for me here is not “can” God or “will” God. The question is whether I am willing to “seek”—to trust that the God of my understanding be powerful enough, loving enough, caring enough—to help me “let go” of these objectionable things, these defects of character. Am I willing to further “abandon [myself] “utterly” to God?

Am I willing to “ask God to help [me] be willing” to “let go” of what I “cling” to?

I “lose interest in selfish things” when I become willing to ask God to help me set the priorities in my life. In Step Six, my priority is to “abandon” my character defects to God that were disclosed to me in Steps Four and Five. I ask God for the willingness to “let go” of them in Step Six in preparation for me to “let God” remove them in Step Seven.

Observations.

1. To claim a spiritual promise in my life, I must *try to apply it* even before I believe it.
2. “Character defects”, driven by resentments, fears and inconsideration, block me from God.
3. Not seeking willingness from God to “let go” of my character defects is delusional behavior.
4. I seek willingness from God in Step Six for me to change. It’s no longer about “them”!
5. I ask God for the willingness to let go of “them”. I am free of my false, entitled victimhood.
6. In Step Six, I experience more trust in God’s care and love—with less desire for certainty.
7. Certainty is the enemy of unity and tolerance. In Step Six, I trust God with my uncertainty.

Next Time, Step Seven: “... know a new freedom and a new happiness.”