

## **Steps Five, Six & Seven – All Meant To Be Done On The Same Day**

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### ***Step 5 Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.***

Please notice that the Fifth Step does NOT say that we just admit our wrongs. It says that we admit the EXACT NATURE of our wrongs, so we need to do more than just confess what we did. We ALSO need to see WHY we did what we did so that we can ask God to help us with it. The Fourth Step's Resentment, Fear and Sex/Harms Inventory guides mentioned in the previous newsletter help us see just that. Steps Five, Six and Seven in the Big Book can be found at the beginning of Chapter 6, "Into Action". Please notice that this chapter is NOT named "Into Thinking" or "Into Hearing About What Others Did" or "Into Studying" or "Into Planning", but is called "Into ACTION". Page 72 says, *"Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude (Step 2), a new relationship with our Creator (Step 3), and to discover the obstacles in our path (Step 4). We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory (all Step 4). Now these are about to be cast out (that was a promise, and they're cast out by our working Steps 5 through 9). This REQUIRES ACTION on our part, which, when completed, will mean that we have admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being, the EXACT NATURE of our defects. (Step 5 actually says, '...the exact nature of our WRONGS.' But this sentence says, '...the exact nature of our DEFECTS.' Bill Wilson likes to use different words that all mean the same thing. Throughout the Big Book and the 12 & 12 he interchanges the words faults, wrongs, mistakes, defects of character or just defects, things we have admitted are objectionable, shortcomings, flaws, liabilities, maladjustments, human failings, deficiencies, and even sins. They ALL mean the same thing - whatever blocks us off from God and others.) This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery mentioned in the preceding chapter.*

*"This is perhaps difficult - especially discussing our defects with another person. We think we have done well enough in admitting these things to ourselves. There is doubt about that. In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal INSUFFICIENT (self cannot overcome self, a self-will problem cannot be fixed by self-will.). Many of us thought it necessary to go MUCH further. We will be MORE reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. "The best reason first (here's a warning): If we skip this VITAL step, we may NOT overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably (or almost always) they got drunk. Having persevered with the REST of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never COMPLETED their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only THOUGHT they had lost their egoism and fear; they only THOUGHT they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it NECESSARY, until they told someone else ALL their life story."*

The 12 & 12 expresses this warning in a similar way when it states on page 56: "Most of us would declare that without a fearless admission of our defects to another human being we could NOT stay sober. It seems plain that the grace of God will NOT enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this."

It's obvious why we share our inventory with another person - because we are MASTERS at believing in our own justifications and half-truths. Aren't we the ones who used to say we didn't have a drinking problem? Didn't we tell ourselves over and over that we were doing fine as we were sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of alcoholism? Since we're not good judges of character, especially our own, we confide in someone else. Only ANOTHER person or person's can see us as we REALLY are. That's why it says that a SOLITARY self-appraisal is insufficient.

The book continues and I'm going to personalize it a bit. Please note that these next two paragraphs apply whether we are drinking or not: *"More than most people, I lead a double life. I am very much the actor. To the outer world I present my stage character. This is the one I like my fellows to see. I want to enjoy a certain reputation, but know in my heart I don't deserve it.*

*The inconsistency is made worse by the things I do on my sprees (drinking sprees, anger sprees, spending sprees, sex sprees, etc.). Coming to my senses, I am revolted at certain episodes I vaguely remember (or remember very clearly). These memories are a nightmare. I tremble to think someone might have observed me. As far as I can, I push these memories far inside myself (which is another way of saying that I ignore my conscience, my Inner Guide which is that piece of God within me). I hope they will never see the light of day. I am under CONSTANT fear and tension - that makes for (or leads to) more drinking. "We MUST be ENTIRELY honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world. Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person OR PERSONS with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics.*

*"If we cannot or would rather not do this, we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend. Perhaps our doctor or psychologist will be the person. It may be one of our own family, but we CANNOT disclose ANYTHING to our wives or our parents which will hurt them and make them unhappy. We have NO right to save our own skin at another person's expense. Such parts of our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected. The rule is we MUST be hard on ourself, but ALWAYS considerate of others."*

When the Big Book came out, the mentality was that this book would fall into the hands of a person who had no AA in their town. Our fellowship has grown to the point where today very few people have to go outside AA to do their Fifth Step. The book gives us four specific attributes to look for in someone who is going to hear our Fifth Step – someone who will understand yet be unaffected, it is important that they be able to keep a confidence, they need to fully understand and approve of what we are driving at, and they need to not try to change our plan. So they should be closemouthed, trustworthy and supportive. They MUST NEVER discuss our inventory with ANYONE else. If you are NOT able to keep a confidence, please do not EVER listen to a Fifth Step! It is a sacred event and may be the first time a person is trusting someone else entirely. You literally have the persons future trust life in your hands. This is NOT to be taken lightly.

Next are the specific instructions for taking the Fifth Step: *"When we decide who is to hear our story, WE WASTE NO TIME (so as soon as we finish writing our Fourth Step we IMMEDIATELY do our Fifth Step. If you're not sure who is going to hear your Fifth Step, it's a good idea to start looking at the beginning of your Fourth Step so that when you are finished with it you can share it with someone at once). We have a written inventory and we are prepared for A LONG TALK. (I'd like to suggest that the most effective way to do a Fifth Step is by doing it all in one day. That way, we get the full effect and the full picture of how devastating our life run on our will is to ourselves and to others.) We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a LIFE-AND-DEATH errand.*

We first share the Fourth Step with God and begin to feel a sense of forgiveness and accumulate power that we bring into admitting these things to someone else. When we then admit our inventories to someone else, we experience humility, get deeper insight and see that we can trust again by telling our deep, dark secrets to someone else. In admitting these things and seeing the truth ourselves, we gain more of an understanding of our inner workings.

The Big Book provides us with more directions: *"We pocket (or put away) our pride and go to it, illuminating EVERY twist of character, EVERY dark cranny of the past."* Three of the things that I always try to draw out of listening to a Fifth Step is the fact that 99.9% (or more) of the Resentment Inventory can be covered in one sentence – "They're not acting the way I think they should." This is a form of playing God and is very self-centered. After this is pointed out again and again, it becomes annoyingly obvious. Another fact that I always try to draw out is a concept called mirroring. Mirroring is seeing in someone else something that we struggle with ourselves. The people that irritate us the most are just showing us something that we don't like about ourselves. So it usually doesn't have anything to do with them and almost always comes back to us. The third thing that I always keep in mind when hearing a Fifth Step is that victims never get sober.

If you split up a Fifth Step over a period of weeks or even days, the offensive picture and effect of a life run on self-will will be compromised. So again, to get the FULL effect and the FULL picture of how self-will has damaged and controlled our lives, it's best to do a Fifth Step ALL on the same day, if possible. It

usually takes most of the day, so make it a priority and simply get started early enough by scheduling an entire day for this life-changing activity. You'll be grateful that you did.

Next are the Fifth Step Promises: *"Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are DELIGHTED. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may have had certain spiritual beliefs (Step 2), but now we begin to have a spiritual experience (that's because we are now taking specific spiritual actions). The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."*

This is about AFTER we have finished sharing our inventories: *"Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for AN HOUR, carefully reviewing what we have done. (So we take ONE hour after the Fifth Step to do the following.) We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him BETTER (this is a prayer. Many spiritual texts say that God is love and truth. After a Fifth Step we certainly know a lot more about love and truth, so we certainly know our Higher Power better). Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the Twelve Steps (which is page 59). CAREFULLY reading the first five proposals (which is referring to the first five Steps) we ask if we have omitted ANYTHING, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"*

Now let's take another look at these questions: *"Is our work solid so far? (Which is another way of saying have I omitted ANYTHING from the first five steps that will cause me to have a weak foundation?) Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?" (Are my first five Steps solid?) Have we tried to make mortar without sand?" (Which is another way of saying have I tried to take the rest of the steps without really being convinced of the First Step?)*

After sharing our inventories with our sponsor or "spiritual advisor", we 1) spend about 20 minutes in prayer and meditation thanking God for the experience and for knowing Him better, 2) spend about 20 minutes ask the God of our understanding if there is anything more that needs to be included in Steps Four and Five, 3) spend about 20 minutes praying and meditating to see if the first five Steps have been done as thoroughly as possible.

#### **Step 6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.**

The 12 & 12 says the following about Step Six: "There is a big difference between striving for a self-determined objective and for the perfect objective which is of God. The only urgent thing is that we make a beginning, and keep trying. We shall need to raise our eyes toward perfection, and be ready to walk in that direction. It will seldom matter how haltingly we walk. The only question will be "Are we ready?" It is suggested that we ought to become entirely willing to aim toward perfection. We note that some delay, however, might be pardoned. That word, in the mind of a rationalizing alcoholic, could certainly be given a long-term meaning. He could say, 'How very easy! Sure, I'll head toward perfection, but I'm certainly not going to hurry any. Maybe I can postpone dealing with some of my problems indefinitely.' Of course, this WON'T do. Such a bluffing of oneself will have to go the way of many another pleasant rationalization. At the very least, we shall HAVE TO come to grips with some of our worst character defects AND take action toward their removal as quickly as we can. The moment we say, 'No, never!' our minds close against the grace of God. Delay is dangerous, and rebellion may be FATAL. This is the exact point at which we abandon limited objectives, and move toward God's Will for us."

In the Big Book, all of Step Six can be found in the first paragraph of page 76. The first line says: *"If we can answer to our satisfaction, we look at Step Six."* If we can answer WHAT to our satisfaction? The Big Book is talking about the questions in the last paragraph of the page before this, page 75. These are the questions we ask ourselves when we take the hour of reflection AFTER we do our Fifth Step by asking us to review whether or not we were thorough and honest in completing the first five Steps. So the Sixth Step is done IMMEDIATELY after taking the hour of quiet time after the Fifth Step.

*"We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable (which means absolutely essential). 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 - everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."*

So in the last three sentences here the book asks us two questions, and depending upon what our answer is FOR these two questions, will depend upon whether we need to involve the last sentence. According to the Big Book, immediately after we do our Fifth Step, it will be decision time once again. The person or person's hearing your Fifth Step will ask you the first Sixth Step question, which is for nothing more than the willingness (or to be entirely ready) to have God remove the defects of character that block us off from

our Higher Power working in and through us. These “wrongs”, “defects” or “shortcomings” were disclosed in our Fourth and Fifth Steps. When asked, take a moment of silence to reflect on whether you are entirely ready, by asking yourself if you are willing to let God help you with these defects.

After you answer the first Sixth Step question, whoever is hearing your Fifth Step asks you the second Sixth Step question, which is do you believe that the God of your own understanding is capable of now taking them all – everyone.

Notice that the Book says in the last line of this paragraph that if there is still a defect of character that we are NOT willing to ask God to help us with, we pray for the willingness. That is all there is to the Sixth Step: Is the God of my own understanding capable of removing my defects, and am I willing to ask my Higher Power to help me with these shortcomings. If I am NOT yet entirely ready to turn over one or more of these human failings to my Higher Power, I pray to ask God to help me become willing.

If you are NOT willing to go to God with one or more of these defects, please remember to pray daily for the willingness and it WILL come, but still go on to Step Seven with the REST of the flaws you ARE willing to let God help you with.

#### **Step 7 Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.**

We need to start realizing that when God begins to remove our self-will defects of character, He will ALWAYS replace them with one of HIS OWN characteristics. If he didn't, we would be the hole in the doughnut and we would be left with an empty space. That space needs to be filled with the OPPOSITE of the defect that we are asking our Higher Power to remove. For instance, if I found a lot of selfishness in my inventory, when I ask God to help me with it, He will replace it with unselfishness. God does for us what we CANNOT do for ourselves, BUT He will NOT do for us what we CAN do for ourselves, so we need to start practicing the opposite of our defects of character. He will help us with our motivation and our thinking, but part of the Seventh Step is that we need to start practicing God's Will characteristics.

In the Big Book, Step Seven is straightforward. It consists of a daily prayer to be said going forward: *“When ready (after answering the Step Six questions), we say something like this: ‘My Creator, I am now willing that You should have all of me, GOOD AND BAD (which is a reference back to the Third Step). 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 (another Third Step reference). Amen.’”*

Step Seven says, *“HUMBLY ask Him to remove our shortcomings”* so I'd like to attempt explaining the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBLY asking. Being humble is becoming aware of the littleness of ourselves, compared to the bigness of God. Did you ever think that your only problem is not getting your way? Being a servant of God is the highest attainment in AA. We CLIMB our way, all the way to servant. That's what a winner is - a servant. A winner is just out there doing what God gives us the intuition to do. And when this transformation takes place, our needs are being met from the inside. So we don't have to go out and get anything to get fixed, we're ALREADY fixed because we already have everything we need, and we're simply moving through life, just looking for ways to be of service to God. So humility is an awareness that we are willing to go through whatever it takes to become God-centered. That means we're going to have to go through the pain of often not getting our way and voluntarily go through this transforming discomfort. Let me use the following story as an illustration: A lump of gray clay was sitting on the shelf next to beautiful teacup. The clay says to the teacup, “Is this all there is to life, just sitting here not doing much of anything? Why can't I be just like you, a teacup that people love, and say is very beautiful?” The teacup says, “Not too long ago, I was just like you. One day soon you will be a teacup too, and people will say that you too are very beautiful and they will also want to take you home with them.” “Yes, I would LOVE that,” says the lump of clay, “Can you ask the Master to make me into a beautiful teacup?”

Right HERE, in THIS part of the story, the clay is just ASKING to become a teacup. But HUMBLY asking is a little different than that, as this will be shown by the REST of the story.

The teacup continues: “Let me tell you what it takes to become the most gorgeous, the most beautiful little teacup that everyone admires and loves.

“I didn't always look like this. There was a time in my life when I too was just a hard cold lump of gray clay. Well, one day my Master came along and He picked me up and He began to pat me and roll me and I said, 'What are you doing, stop it, quit, that hurts, don't do that, ouch, leave me alone.' And He simply said, 'Not yet.'”

“And then He put me on this wheel and began to spin me around and around and around and I said, 'I'm getting dizzy, getting sick to my stomach, let me off of here, I can't stand this, oh, oh, what's happening, my whole shape is changing, stop it, stop it.' And He said, 'Not yet.'

After my shape had changed, He began to paint me all over. I said, 'Eew, cough, cough, that stuff stinks, stop it, stop it.' And He still said, 'Not yet.'

“Then He put me in this oven and closed the door. The oven had a little window and He kept just looking at me. And I said, 'I can't stand this heat, let me out of here, cough, cough, don't You love me, let me out of here, why are You just looking at me?' And He simply looked at me through the door and said, 'Not yet.'

“Then, finally, He opened the door, took me and dried me on the shelf for a while and put another coat of that awful paint on me (cough, cough). And then He turned that oven back on seven times hotter than it was before and put me back in there again, and I said, 'What are you doing, I can't stand this, You don't understand, I can't do this, I can't take it, let me out of here,' He just looked through the glass at me and said, 'Not yet.'

“Finally one day, He opened the door, took me out and set me on the shelf, let me cool off for a while and then came by with a mirror and He held it up in front of me and I couldn't believe it. I was so beautiful, I was so changed, I was so different. I didn't even look like that old lump of gray clay any more. And now people EVERYWHERE appreciate and love me.”

NOW, if you ask, you're HUMBL Y asking. You KNOW what's involved, you KNOW that it's not going to be easy, but you want it ANYWAY. Spirituality is about changing our attitude about pain and discomfort. It is looking THROUGH the pain to see the beauty of what is coming. The transformation is just on the OTHER side of the willingness to experience not getting my way. And as soon as we go through it, it isn't even painful, it merely becomes a little effort. It's kinda like when you're OUT of shape and you want to get back IN shape. It's hard at first. Remember that first week in the gym when you go home and everything hurts, everywhere? But as you keep it up, a month later, it's no longer painful, it merely becomes a little effort. And it's wonderful because you know the great results it's going to produce. After a while, you LOVE pushing yourself because of the wonderful results. And the same thing can happen in the spiritual world. I UNDERSTAND that at times I'm going to be uncomfortable, but I'm willing to go through with it anyway because I trust my Higher Power. That's the difference between just ASKING, and HUMBL Y asking.