

HEARING 5th STEPS

(Compliments of the “Men’s Step Application Group”, Bellevue, WA. at www.msag.org)

Big Book - Chapter Seven - “Working With Others” (page 96):

“Suppose you are making your second visit to a man. He has read this volume and says he is prepared to go through with the Twelve Steps of the program of recovery. Having had the experience yourself, you can give him much practical advice. Let him know you are available if he wishes to make a decision and tell his story ...”

We find reference to doing the Third Step with your new man and offering to HEAR his Fifth Step. All the references in Chapter 6 to doing it with non alcoholics are there because there was no Fellowship - the book was for “mail order” sobriety; it was hoping you, the reader, would begin to “create the Fellowship you crave.”

In *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Bill writes on Step Five:

“We shall want to speak with someone ... who has not only stayed dry...” and “Until we talked with complete candor of our inner conflicts, and had listened to someone else do the same, we still didn’t belong.”

Here we find more information along the same lines, encouraging us to HEAR a Fifth Step so we can “belong.” It is our opinion that the “Step process” is incomplete without HEARING at least one Fifth Step. Little is written in our “textbooks” on this, so we are sharing here a course of action that has worked effectively for us.

In our view, to qualify, it helps to have done a 4th & 5th Step (& preferably not stopped there!).

We have met many who have avoided this opportunity (responsibility) for Spiritual growth through fear, laziness or disinterest. Another often used “reason” for not hearing a Fifth Step is something like: “Well, I really don’t know him that well.” That can be turned to an advantage in the fact that you can be even more objective, which is defined as impartial, fair or unbiased. Of course, when this process is done, you will know him (her) as a reflection of yourself! We could write pages (maybe a book) on how we are “all cut from the same cloth” and “tarred with the same brush.” These are experiential conclusions that will come after you have heard a Fifth Step. We are doing more than just hearing. We believe that we are asking to be a “channel” for God in this highly personal aspect of another person’s recovery. It is an attempt to get “ourselves out of the way” for as long as it takes. We are not being asked to “play the role” of doctor, minister, psychiatrist, judge or counselor. In fact, it’s a good idea to qualify ourselves out loud that we DO NOT possess these qualifications. Merely one alcoholic with another alcoholic attempting to get closer to God by DOING the Steps.

Praying for Guidance and Direction, we “set the stage” by taking the phone off the hook or turning the ringer off. If there is a likelihood of knocks on the door, leave a note asking not to be disturbed. Together, we pray to have God join us, to bring about this “channel” state of consciousness. We pray for our hearts and minds to be open, that we be given whatever is necessary to accomplish our individual roles.

Ask if you may take notes. Ask if you may give “feedback.” Most people are pleased that we are willing to make more of an effort than “just listen.” Notes help us for several reasons; we don’t have to keep trying to remember stuff, which allows more of our undivided attention. We will, with no seeming effort, often be able to detect patterns of behavior that “just seem to appear” from these notes. Often certain words will “leap out” and form the basis of a “Step 6 & 7 list.” We make certain that they know the notes will become their property as soon as we are done. The “feedback?” If we are trying to be like a “conference call to God” then just do what “feels” right. We gently share what has been “revealed” to us in the HEARING. It may seem prudent to ask: “Is there any last dirty rotten little secret that you are withholding and will take YOU to the grave?”

Moving toward “Trusting God” is an experiential process. To quote a line from the *Big Book* on page 63: “He provided what we needed if we kept close to Him and performed His work well.”

When done, we pray together in the Spirit of Thankfulness for this priceless opportunity to clean house, “live out loud” for perhaps the first time in our lives, and move another Step along the Path. Next, the questions on page 75 of the Big Book “Returning home ...” are answered.

(Again: the Big Book was written for “mail order” sobriety - there was no Fellowship.)

At this point, we allow the “giver” of the 5th Step the opportunity to decide if they would like to perform a “ceremonial burning” of the paperwork (including notes but excluding Step 6 and 8 “lists”). If these have not been organized, we let this be the opportunity to do so. Regardless of what course is decided, we, as the HEARERS of Step 5, thank the “giver” for their trust and dedication to action. We ask that we be called if “more is revealed” and openly share in their exhilaration as the dark burdens are lifted.

Time? Step 5 takes as long as it takes. We usually set aside the entire day, so there is no haste to be “done” at any certain time. We do all that we can to avoid rigidity and expectations. We trust God with the rest. If we need to eat, we eat. If we need to rest, we rest. Sometimes it “feels right” to take a break. We must remind ourselves often that this Step is a process that means the difference between life and death - or insanity/incarceration; between happiness and misery; between isolation and a sense of unity.

Results? What we experience is very individual, so we try not to “set ourselves up” with a list of expectations. Generally, the “giver” feels a very strong sense of relief and the “hearer” feels tired and spiritually energized at the same time. Please remember, there’s no such thing as a BAD Fifth Step for either party if this is approached from a Spiritual Perspective. We remind ourselves that this is a very individual experience.

Specific results for those HEARING 5th Steps are: a sense of belonging, a spiritual reminder that we are more alike than different, and a deeper sense of commitment, understanding and effectiveness. Prejudice becomes transformed into compassion, and the power of “shared suffering” cuts through resentment with ease. This can be a landmark on the road to spiritual humility; by placing ourselves in God’s Hands we begin to truly experience “freedom from the bondage of SELF.”

It’s about Spirituality .

It’s about Brotherly Love.

It’s about Compassion.

It’s about Understanding.

It’s about Love.

It’s about the ‘magic’ of one alcoholic with another alcoholic.

It’s about Forgiveness.

It’s about God.

It’s about the preparation to be of Service to others and ...

Like the rest of the “instructions:”

JUST DO IT !

JUST HEAR IT!

It is “an experience YOU MUST NOT MISS!”