

STEP FIVE-Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

If we have been honest and thorough with our personal inventory we have listed and analyzed our character defects and have a record of the harm we have caused others. We have a list of our greater handicaps and imperfections and also the names of the people who have suffered as a result of our unmanageable lives and insane behavior. These facts indicate certain defects in our lives; they constitute the record we have made of our wrongs. We have ascertained our weak spots and not only proposed to erase them, but also to prepare a plan of action that will bring restitution and happiness to the men and women who have suffered mental, physical, or financial harm as a direct result of our uncontrolled drinking.

Step Five is a preparatory step to the restitution that we expect to make as we carry out the provisions of Step Nine, where amends are necessary and we make them.

The exact nature of our wrongs must be admitted to God and ourselves and then talked over with a *third person*.

The general trend of thought with the new (AA) member is to discount the importance of admitting anything to *Another Human Being*.

The founders of our movement knew the value of doing this; they knew that only by so doing could we acquire the humility and spiritual inspiration necessary to continuous development in A.A. living.

Most of us felt that our self appraisals were exacting and because we had conceded to God the error of our former alcoholic thought and conduct we saw no need to go farther. We reasoned that God knew; that He would forgive us and so the matter was closed.

This is sugar-coated alcoholic thinking. It follows the old pattern and is but a pretense, a new form of escape from responsibility. We must give our long hoarded secrets to another person if we are to gain peace of mind, confidence, and self-respect.

The humility this step brings us is imperative to our future welfare. We will have no spiritual inspiration, no release from anxiety and fear until we remove the skeletons from our closet. We are to stop dodging people and start facing facts and issues if freedom from dread and tension is to be ours.

Step Five is a pivotal step. It calls for action that starts a real spiritual awakening as we back up our FAITH with VERBAL WORKS.

If the step seems difficult to you, (and it may well seem that way) remember that you are no exception. Many of us experienced the same reaction. The reaction is nothing more than the reflexes of a dying alcoholic personality trying to avoid reality - too little time has elapsed between our sudden change from and alcoholic's rationalization to that of rehabilitative conduct necessary to our program. We unconsciously are being dominated by our old thoughts. These are but momentary thoughts of rebellion. They will quickly give way to the sublimating power of our new philosophy if we will be open-minded and have faith that God will aid us in arriving at the right solution.

The step specifically outlines the action to be taken. When the right time arrives, arrange and interview with anyone outside of A.A. (Read paragraphs 6 & 7, in chapter 6, in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous") who will be "*understanding but unaffected*" by your narration. We should not take this step with anyone who might not respect our confidences. For this reason the clergyman or psychiatrist is our best bet. Most of

these callings are qualified and will be honored by the confidence placed in them when they hear our story.

There is no stated time for taking the step - it is not to be rushed into. We do not take it as a form that must be complied with. There is a state of mind that will arise in all sincere members who "lose themselves" in A.A. philosophy which will indicate clearly when they are ready. When this time arrives, however, we must act at once. To postpone taking it is inconsistent with our plan of recovery.

If in doubt about when to take Step Five - take it immediately. It is far better to take it before we think we are ready than to postpone it and then not take it at all. Many members with years of sobriety in A.A. find that taking Step Five from time to time helps them to maintain their contented sobriety. Step Five brings mental and spiritual catharsis and perhaps should be taken periodically.

You are not engaged in a business deal with God and another human being. If your inventory has been thorough, "you are in a position to pocket your pride," to tell a story "that will illuminate every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past." You have no reason to doubt the psychological and spiritual value offered. You will be well rewarded for your effort and will find yourself at a loss to express in words the gratification that will be yours. *Understanding of such things comes only with experience.*

Interpretation of the deep significance of admitting our wrongs to God, ourselves and another human being are logically summed up by saying, "Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. *We have had* certain spiritual beliefs, but NOW WE BEGIN TO HAVE A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE" (Read pages 73 - 74 in the Big Book.)

SUMMARIZATION - The metamorphosis from the alcoholic to the NEW A.A. PERSONALITY becomes more evident upon completion of Step Five. We are impressed with the simplicity of this effective spiritual device which has been the means of starting within us a spiritual awakening. The step is a direct challenge to our sincerity, inasmuch as we have been promised humility and a spiritual experience when we have talked over our defects with a third person.

This is the one step in the program that advises you what to do when you have completed it. This advice is given in our A.A. Book. It says, "Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our hearts that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the pages which contain the Twelve Steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building *An Arch Through Which We Will 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? If we can answer to our satisfaction, we can then look to Step Six."

The Little Red Book