

Session #5 – Steps 10, 11 & 12

This is the last in the series of five "Here Are The Steps We Took" Beginner Meetings. During this session we will spend much of our time, sharing some “how to” techniques, and the results of seeking and improving conscious contact with the God of our understanding. We will begin to experience the life changing spiritual awakening that occurs as we move from a “life run on self-will” to a life guided by “the vision of God’s Will.”

We have been trying to de-mystify the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and to show you just how simple this program truly is. For those of you who will be completing your Steps tonight, we congratulate you for your efforts and we welcome you to the “sunlight of the Spirit.”

Please remember that, in order to remain spiritually fit, we MUST be of service to other alcoholics. We do not help them because THEY are sick, we help them because WE are sick and part of our recovery is that we need to be positively contributing to others. We can think of no greater service than helping others through the Twelve Steps so that they too, can find AA’s spiritual solution to alcoholism.

It is ESSENTIAL that we NEVER forget that recovery is an ONGOING process. We don’t just take the Steps once and then “rest on our laurels” (which means to settle for past achievements). We cannot stay sober TODAY on YESTERDAY’S spiritual awakening. Remember, “alcoholism is a subtle foe, cunning, baffling, powerful,” and let me also include patient. We MUST repeat the process again and again in order to remain and grow in our fit spiritual condition.

So, please come back for the next series of Beginners’ Meetings. We are sure you will gain additional insight into the “Big Book,” Alcoholics Anonymous and continue to deepen and broaden your relationship with the “One who has all power.”

Welcome to the fifth session of the 1_-hour A.A. Beginners’ Meetings. This is the payoff. This is what we have been waiting for – to recover from the seemingly hopeless state of spirit, mind and body known as alcoholism. By completing the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, you WILL experience the spiritual awakening that WILL change your life forever.

Our names are _____ and _____ and we are members of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is a pleasure to be a part of this life changing process – to watch people grow spiritually right before our very eyes.

So that we can complete each session within 1_ hours and still provide ample time for questions, we request that you write down anything that you do not understand or need clarified and save it until the end of the session. We will answer questions at that time.

Let's see who's ready to be rocketed into that fourth dimension of existence that the "Big Book" writes about. Please turn in your Big Book to page 76. Before we go on to the daily disciplines of Steps Ten through Twelve, we would like to take Steps Six and Seven together as a group. Starting with the second line on page 76, the book now makes a statement and then asks us two simple questions:

"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 - 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. Like we said before, please realize that the book instructs us to take our Sixth and Seventh Step an hour after we shared our Fifth Step. Even if you have ALREADY started working with the Sixth and Seventh Step, we ask that you now do it again with us together as a group.

Let's start by getting quiet, so we can become aware of God's presence with us now, and ask ourselves 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 "unsalable goods" or "shortcomings" were disclosed in our Fourth and Fifth Steps. So let's take a moment of silence to reflect on whether we are entirely ready, by asking ourselves if we are willing to let God help us with these defects.

(*****Please pause for about ten seconds please*****)

Now, please also ask yourself the second Sixth Step question, which is if you believe that the God of your own understanding is capable of now taking them all – everyone.

(*****Please pause for about ten seconds please*****)

Notice that the Book says in the last line of the first paragraph on page 76, 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 Six 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.

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

Will all those working the Steps with us these past few weeks, who have completed their Fifth Step over the last week and are ready to go on to Steps Six through Nine, please stand.

(*****Please pause and wait for them to stand*****)

These are the two Sixth Step questions:

Do you believe in a Higher Power that can now help you with all these defects – everyone, AND are you now ready to let God remove from you ALL the things which you have admitted are objectionable in your Fourth and Fifth Steps?

Please answer, one at a time, yes or no.

(*****Have each newcomer answer the question*****)

Thank you. Please be seated.

Those of you who answered yes to these questions have completed the Sixth Step and are ready to proceed to Step Seven. 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.

In the Big Book, Step Seven is straightforward. It consists of a prayer.

The second paragraph on page 76 contains the Seventh Step Prayer. It reads:

“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.’”

We would like each of you who is ready to take the Seventh Step to read the prayer along with us a second time.

Let's read the Seventh Step Prayer together as a group.

“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.”

From now on, please include the Third and Seventh Step Prayers as part of your daily prayer life. Also, remember that each of you was given a Seventh Step card to assist you in working this Step going forward. Not only is this a great way to include God in on relieving our shortcomings, but it is also a great way to affirm daily the direction within ourselves that we are trying to move toward. Also, be sure to write your Eighth Step harms list and begin to go out to set right the wrongs you have done. Be sure to talk with your sponsor and Step support group before doing each amend so that amends are done considerately and in a way where no further harm is done.

Congratulations. You are the ones who are in the process of experiencing the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism. We are so happy that you are doing what it takes to move away from self-imposed misery by participating in ALL of A.A.'s spiritual solution. You have chosen to let God direct your lives. Let's see what we need to do in order to expand this new God-consciousness. We need to be living the

disciplines of the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Steps, on a DAILY basis. Let's start with Step Ten.

Step 10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong PROMPTLY admitted it.

Notice that the Tenth Step says that when we were wrong we promptly ADMIT it. It DOESN'T say that when we were wrong we promptly JUSTIFY it. The first three Steps are designed to bring us to the point where we become WILLING to turn our will and our lives over to the care of a Higher Power, Steps Four through Nine are HOW we turn our will and our lives over by removing what blocks us from actually doing so, and the last three Steps are how we KEEP our will and our lives turned over to God indefinitely.

A large part of Step Ten is a summary of Steps Four through Nine, to be used quickly on a moment-by-moment basis throughout each day. Step Eleven shows us how to deepen and broaden our conscious contact with the God of our understanding. And Step Twelve gives us the goal of the Steps - which is a spiritual awakening, tells us how to carry our life-changing message to others, and gives us many tips on how to practice these principles in ALL our affairs.

1*****NEXT LEADER*****

Please turn to the middle of page 84. The key to Step Ten are the words, "continue to take personal inventory." The "Big Book" emphasizes the importance of continuing to take the Steps. The middle of Page 84, right after the 9th Step Promises, the Big Book says:

"Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

"This thought (the thought of the 9th Step Promises materializing if we work for them) brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we CONTINUE to take personal inventory and CONTINUE to set right ANY new mistakes AS WE GO ALONG. We VIGOROUSLY commenced this way of living AS we cleaned up the past (so the book tells us when to start VIGOROUSLY using the tools of Steps Ten and Eleven. These two Steps should be practiced as we start cleaning up the past by making our Step Nine amends. The book

continues.). We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to GROW in understanding and effectiveness. (Grow in understanding and effectiveness of what? Of being in AND inspired by the world of the Spirit. The book continues.). This is NOT an overnight matter. It SHOULD continue for our LIFETIME.”

In this paragraph the authors tell us how to live, one day at a time. We call this our twenty-four-hour plan. We CONTINUE to take inventory, CONTINUE to make amends and CONTINUE to help others, EVERY day.

Let’s look at the third sentence in this paragraph again. It is VERY important. It reads, “We have entered the world of the Spirit.” This sentence contains an amazing revelation. Basically, the “Big Book” has just informed us that our lives have already changed as the result of taking Steps One through Nine. They state that we have already had a spiritual awakening.

How could that be? Well, it’s very simple. There is no way a newcomer can get through these Steps alone. You have not only developed a belief in a God of your understanding, but you have come to rely upon this Power to help you through the inventory and restitution process. You are now living in the solution. Some of you may not realize it yet, but the “psychic change” that Dr. Silkworth mentioned in “The Doctor’s Opinion” as being ESSENTIAL, has now occurred.

Further down on page 84, the authors tell us PRECISELY how to take a Tenth Step, moment by moment, inventory. The book says:

“...Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. (We first did this in Step 4.) When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.” (This is referring to Steps 6 & 7, and it’s not suggesting that we ask our Higher Power to “at once remove them,” it’s saying that we “at once ASK God to remove them.” Also, notice that this line says, “WHEN these crop up,” not, “IF these crop up,” so we need to stay aware of when selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear are resurfacing throughout our life. And Step Ten is NOT to be taken ONLY at night, as it is sometimes suggested in our fellowship, the book says that it’s to be taken ALL through the day, WHENEVER these things crop up, moment by moment, as soon as we become aware of them. The book continues.) “We discuss them with someone immediately (Step 5) and make amends QUICKLY if we have

harmed anyone (Steps 8 & 9). Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we CAN help (Not just anybody, but someone we CAN help, which is part of Step 12.). Love and tolerance of others is our code.”

The next line can ALSO be considered as part of the directions for taking this Step:

“And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone – even alcohol.”

This part of Step Ten is certainly easier said than done, but it’s important for us to make it a priority and to start moving in the direction of no longer fighting or arguing with anything or anyone.

So the “Big Book’ provides us with specific instructions on how to rid ourselves of these self-centered behaviors. First we MUST continue realizing (as we did in Step Three) that self-centered behaviors are NOT consistent with God’s plan for our lives and they will ONLY lead us back to drinking. Next, we MUST continue taking the actions necessary to move away from self-will toward God’s Will. We ask God to remove these shortcomings, we discuss them with our “sponsor” or spiritual advisor, and if necessary, we set right (to the best of our ability) any wrong WE have done. Then, we try to focus on someone we can help. So it’s: “watch, ask, discuss, amend, and turn”.

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

The “Big Book” affirms that if we do the work of Steps One through Nine and apply the Tenth Step on a DAILY basis, God WILL remove the obsession to drink. This is another of the many promises we find throughout the Steps in this book. They are the Tenth Step Promises, and they are sometimes called “The Forgotten Promises” because we usually only refer to the Ninth Step ones. As a matter of fact, MOST of the Steps in this book have specific promises associated with them. At the bottom of page 84 they write:

“And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone – even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or

effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality – safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed (and the problem they are talking about here is the mental obsession and the spiritual malady). It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. (Now here a warning.) That is how we react so long as (or IF) we keep in FIT spiritual condition.”

What is part of keeping fit spiritually? Taking a daily inventory. What is our reward? A daily reprieve.

There is an expression that describes the Tenth Step perfectly. It goes something like this: If we remove our garbage promptly, our house doesn't stink. I'm sure if you think about it, everyone here can relate.

The “Big Book” describes this daily reprieve in the middle of page 85:

“It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. (Our laurels are our past victories. The book continues with a warning.) We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we REALLY have is a daily reprieve CONTINGENT (or dependent) on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. (Now please notice these next few sentences.) EVERY day is a day when we MUST carry the vision of GOD'S WILL into ALL of our activities. ‘How can I BEST serve Thee – THY Will (not mine) be done.’ These are thoughts which MUST go with us CONSTANTLY. We can exercise our will power along THIS line all we wish. It is the proper use of the will.”

Another reward is God-consciousness – direct contact with our Higher Power. In the next paragraph on page 85, the “Big Book” tells us:

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has ALL knowledge and power. If we CAREFULLY followed direction, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this VITAL sixth sense. But we MUST go further and that means MORE action.”

Once again, the authors declare that our lives have changed – we’ve already had the spiritual awakening. They say we have become conscious of the Spirit of the Universe, and we are now receiving strength, inspiration and direction from this Spirit. Not only that, but they say that this sixth sense is VITAL or ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL.

Now, it’s time to find out who is ready to proceed. The directions for taking the Tenth Step are found in the second paragraph on page 84. Starting with line two, the “Big Book” writes:

“...we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes AS WE GO ALONG.”

Will those who are working the Steps with us and have completed their Fifth, Sixth & Seventh Steps over the last week please stand?

(*****Please pause & wait for them to stand*****)

This is the Tenth Step question:

Will you continue to take personal inventory on a moment by moment basis, as you have seen just outlined on page 84, and continue to set right any new mistakes AS YOU GO ALONG?

Please answer one at a time, yes or no.

(*****Have each person standing answer the question*****)

Thank you. Please be seated.

All of you who answered yes to this question are ready and willing to practice Step Ten, which is the striving to carry the vision of God's Will into all of our activities; but when we fall short, practicing Steps Four through Nine, to be used quickly on a moment-by-moment basis throughout each day, one day at a time.

Now let’s move on to the Eleventh Step.

1*****NEXT LEADER*****

Step 11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying ONLY for knowledge for His will for us and the power to carry that out.

The Eleventh Step starts at the bottom of page 85 and extends through page 88. It's a good idea to read Steps Ten and Eleven out of the "Big Book" each day for a few months, as part of your morning time with God, until you internalize the incredibly effective way of life these two Steps offer. There is a lot contained in these four pages. As we have already seen, the Big Book has been writing about prayer and meditation throughout the Book.

At the bottom of page 85, we find:

"Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it CONSTANTLY. It works, IF we 1- have the proper attitude AND 2- work at it." So for it to work, we need to use action and attitude.

What does the Big Book mean when it says, "it works"? In essence it is telling us that self-examination, meditation and prayer puts us in contact with our Creator. Hopefully that's what we've been doing these past weeks - making conscious contact with the God of our understanding.

Then at the top of page 86, they make the statement:

"...It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions."

At night, they suggest we review the day's activities. Once again, they ask us to use the A.A. self-will test to judge our actions. Page 86, paragraph 1:

"When we retire at night, we CONSTRUCTIVELY review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? (Step 4 again) Do we owe an apology? (Steps 8 & 9) Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? (Step 5) Were we kind and loving toward all? (Step 12) What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? (Step 4) Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? (Step 12) But we MUST be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After

making our review, we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." (Steps 6 & 7. So our basic text is once again basically describing the process of Steps 4 through 9 being used in a quick way to review our day when we retire at night. The book continues.)

"ON AWAKENING (not on our way to work, nor after we've showered and eaten, nor at some point in the morning, but as soon as we wake up,) let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. (Which is ANOTHER reference back to the Third Step.) Under THESE conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane WHEN our thinking is cleared of wrong motives."

So the book tells us to meditate first thing in the morning. Let's look at the sentence beginning with, "Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking..." Please notice these words, they are VERY important. "Before we begin..." - Before we begin what? Before we begin considering our plans for THIS day, and before listening to our Inner Voice. How do we know we're supposed to listen to God? Because, right afterward, it says we ask God to direct our thinking. If we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives, doesn't it stand to reason that our next thoughts are possibly going to be from our Higher Power? What do we call these thoughts from God? We call these thoughts guidance.

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

The Big Book tells us that our Creator will provide us with the answers to all of our issues. They even disclose how the Spirit of the Universe is going to answer our request for help. At the bottom of page 86, they write:

"In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. (Now some prayer.) Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while."

So, God is going to tell us His plan for our lives in the form of inspiration, an intuitive thought or an intuitive decision, and in some cases God speaks through others.

The Big Book tells us to test our thoughts. Not all of them come from God. But, with time and practice we begin to rely upon this insight. On the top of page 87, they write:

"What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. (That's a promise, but here's a warning.) Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We may pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking WILL, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it." (That's another promise.)

To protect ourselves from absurd actions and ideas, we MUST test our thoughts to separate self-will from God's Will. Our identifying God's Will needs time to grow, so it is important to discuss these inspirations or thoughts with a sponsor or spiritual advisor. In the 12 & 12 on page 60, it also says, "Going it alone in spiritual matters is dangerous. How many times we have heard well-intentioned people claim the guidance of God when it was all too plain they were sorely mistaken."

The Big Book continues on page 87, paragraph 1:

"We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown ALL through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make NO request for ourselves ONLY. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful NEVER to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why."

The Book is giving us information to create a healthy prayer life. First thing is that we pray for freedom from self-will. And the second is NEVER to request for ourselves ONLY. But we can request for ourselves IF others will be helped. The book continues.

“If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.”

There are many powerful things that can help improve our conscious contact. Perhaps ask others what influenced them on THEIR spiritual path. Next paragraph:

“As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.” (Please notice that agitation comes WELL before anger or rage, and being doubtful comes WELL before being in deep trouble.)

Starting with the last line on page 87, the Big Book tells us we MUST get out of self-will in order to learn God's plan for our lives. In other words, here is ANOTHER reminder of the commitment we made in Step Three:

"We CONSTANTLY remind ourselves we are NO longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves, MANY times EACH day "Thy will be done." (Now here's the results of working Step 11, otherwise known as the rest of the 11th Step Promises) We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works - it really does."

This is an ironclad guarantee. It works! From first hand experience we can state that guidance has been working in our lives ever since we began this daily practice.

1*****NEXT LEADER*****

But, what if we don't receive any God-given thoughts or guidance? Let us assure you, this can happen from time to time. Remember, “All we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual

condition." If we don't receive any guidance, it means we might still be blocked off from our Higher Power in some way, and simply have some work to do to clear it away. God's guidance is as freely available as the air we breathe. If I am not receiving inspired thoughts when I try to listen, the fault is not God's. Usually it is because there is something I will not do. Something wrong in my life that I will not face and make right, a habit or indulgence I will not give up, a person I will not forgive, a wrong relationship in my life I will not give up, maybe we've taken back our will in some area of our lives, or maybe we haven't done something we know our Higher Power wants us to do. Check these points and be honest. If this is the case, we need to take the actions necessary to re-establish our connection with our Creator. Then try listening again.

In the second paragraph on page 88 they tell us that, once again, we need God's help:

"We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. Faith without works is dead."

Self-examination, meditation and prayer take dedication and practice. If we do the work, we will receive the rewards - a life filled with health, happiness and peace of mind beyond our wildest dreams. In the 12 & 12, during the commentary about the Eleventh Step on page 98, it says the following:

“There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation, and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an UNSHAKABLE foundation for life. Now and then we may be granted a glimpse of that ultimate reality which is God’s Kingdom. And we will be comforted and assured that our own destiny in that realm will be secure for so long as we try, however falteringly, to find and do the Will of our own Creator.”

We will conclude our discussion of the Eleventh Step with some meditation so each of us can become awake to the awareness of the God of our understanding RIGHT NOW.

As we go into this meditation time, please try to be quiet and still. Remember to ask God to direct your thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonesty or self-seeking motives, and let's see what happens when we try to experience conscious contact.

Say to yourself silently something like this:
God, I now ask You to direct my thinking. I especially ask that these thoughts be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.

(*****Please provide three or four minutes of silence*****)

Thank you.

If an inspired thought came to you during this meditation, you may want to write it down and then share it with someone later to see if the two of you think that it may be God-inspired thoughts. Then, go out and do whatever you were guided to do - it's that simple!

At the bottom of page 88 it says, "The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve." That does NOT mean that ALL the information on Step Twelve can be found in this chapter, but that this chapter is only going to talk about Step Twelve. As a matter of fact, this chapter, which is called "Working With Others", gives us the part of Step Twelve that deals ONLY with ways of carrying this message to other alcoholics. Chapter 8 "To Wives", chapter 9 "The Family Afterward", and chapter 10 "To Employers" give us MORE information about working with a new person, as well as what to keep in mind when trying to practice these principles in ALL our affairs.

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

(*****If appropriate, please pass the collection baskets*****)

Now, let's move on to the Twelfth Step.

Step 12 Having had a spiritual awakening as THE result of these steps, we tried to carry THIS message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in ALL our affairs.

If you really look at the last three Steps, you'll notice that the Tenth Step talks about, "continuing," the Eleventh Step talks about, "seeking and improving," and the Twelfth Step talks about "practicing" and "in ALL our affairs," so our Program leaves no room for complacency or coasting. And besides, the only way you can coast is down hill. The Steps are kinda like walking up a down escalator. IF you keep moving you CAN get to the next level, but if you slow down or stop moving, it brings you right back down to where you came from. I don't know about you, but I DESPERATELY do not want to go back to where I came from.

Now that we've made conscious contact with the God of our understanding, we have received that greatest gift of this program – a spiritual awakening. God is now guiding us in such a way that it is indeed miraculous. This life changing experience comes suddenly to some (as in a spiritual experience), and gradually to others (as in a spiritual awakening). Let's see what else we can learn about this miraculous event.

Please turn once again to Appendix II on page 569 in the Third Edition or page 567 in the Fourth Edition. This appendix was written AFTER the publication of the first printing of the "Big Book" in April of 1939. In the first printing, the Twelfth Step read:

"Having had a spiritual EXPERIENCE as the result of these steps,..."

In the two years between the first and second printings, the word "experience" in the Twelfth Step was discussed at length. As time went by, letters from alcoholics started to come in to the main office from people who did the work out of the Big Book and did NOT have the "White Light" spiritual experience that Bill Wilson had. They were writing to see if the more gradual spiritual awakening that they were having meant that they could not recover from alcoholism. This was the reason for adding Appendix II. Eventually the word "experience" was replaced with the word "awakening" in the Twelfth Step. The Big Book authors made this modification in order to include those whose lives had truly changed, but more slowly over a period of time.

Many of you will find this to be the case also. Your life has changed, but gradually rather than suddenly. You may not be able to point to a specific experience or event that brought about the change, but the spiritual awakening has occurred nonetheless.

At the top of page 569 if you have a Third Edition or 567 in the Fourth Edition, the authors define the term “spiritual awakening” where it says:

“The terms ‘spiritual experience’, ‘spiritual awakening’ (and of course Dr. Silkworth in the Doctor’s Opinion calls it ‘a psychic change’) are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.”

“Yet it is true that our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous” (which means incorrect).

A spiritual awakening is nothing more than a psychic change that, among other things, eliminates our obsession to drink.

So Bill Wilson’s rapid conversion experience at Town’s Hospital, although it is similar to other experiences in our fellowship, is the exception rather than the rule. Further down on page 569 in the Third Edition of the Big Book or 567 in the Fourth Edition in paragraph 4, we find the description of a more gradual spiritual experience:

“Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self discipline. With few exceptions our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.”

As we read these next few lines in the book, we learn just how easy it is to have a spiritual awakening:

“Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it ‘God-consciousness’.”

That’s all there is to it. If you’ve made contact with the God of your understanding and try to follow your Higher Power’s guidance, you have in fact, already had the spiritual awakening.

1*****NEXT LEADER*****

Congratulations. You are now living in the “sunlight of the Spirit.”

But, the spiritual awakening is just the first part of the Twelfth Step. Let’s look at what we have to do to sustain this spiritual transformation.

Please turn back to the top of page 89. Chapter 7, in its entirety is devoted to carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to others. The “Big Book” authors tell us what we MUST do to enlarge our new God-consciousness. The top of page 89 says:

“Practical experience shows that NOTHING will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry THIS message to other alcoholics! You can help when NO ONE else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail.”

When WE work with others, OUR lives change. Like it was said before, we don’t help another alcoholic because THEY’RE sick, we help another alcoholic because WE are sick, and part of our program of recovery is that we need to be helping others. In the second paragraph on page 89, the authors give us SOME of the results of working Step 12 otherwise known as some of the Twelfth Step Promises. The second paragraph on page 89:

“Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends – this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. FREQUENT contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”

On pages 89 through 103, the authors provide us with specific instructions on how to carry our lifesaving message of recovery to others. They offer many valuable suggestions on these pages. For now, we are only going to highlight a few of them.

At the top of page 90, they start with the following advice:

“When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him. If he does not want to stop drinking (in other words, if he is NOT willing to go to any lengths), don’t waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity.”

In the middle of page 91, the “Big Book” authors even provide us with specifics on what to say. First we tell the prospect our story:

“See your man alone, if possible. (They are not suggesting that we do Twelfth Step work by ourselves. They are suggesting that the A.A.’s should be alone in the room with the new person so that they are not distracted by the alcoholic’s friends or family. The book continues.) At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed.”

Then on page 92, paragraph 1, it says:

“IF you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, begin to dwell on the hopeless feature of the malady. (So it’s saying here that WE need to be satisfied that they are a real alcoholic. We need to qualify them by talking about what differentiates an alcoholic from a non-alcoholic, and seeing if they can relate to the drinking experience of an alcoholic. The book continues.) Show him, from your own experience, how the queer mental condition (which is the mental obsession or mental blank spot) surrounding that first drink prevents normal functioning of the will power.” (In other words, that his best thinking CANNOT keep him away from the next drink if they are an alcoholic.)

Please turn to the bottom of page 94, where it says the following:

“Your candidate may give reasons why he need not follow ALL of the program. He may rebel at the thought of a drastic housecleaning which requires discussion with other people. Do not contradict such views. Tell him you ONCE felt as he does, BUT you DOUBT whether you would have made much progress had you NOT taken action.”

See how easy it is? For the next several pages we are provided additional suggestions on what to say and what not to say, what to do and what not to do, during our Twelfth Step calls.

Then on the top of page 96, the authors tell us not to give up if we are unsuccessful at getting through to the prospect. Basically, they tell us to plant the seed and move on. Top of page 96:

“Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.”

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

In the middle of the first full paragraph on page 98, they tell us what to do about the person who makes one excuse after another about why he or she can't stop drinking. Middle of the first full paragraph on page 98:

“...He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job – wife or no wife – we simply do NOT stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.”

“Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of ANYONE. The ONLY condition is that he trust in God and clean house.”

How much simpler can it get? Like Dr. Bob said in his last major talk, “Trust God, clean house, and help others!”

In the first paragraph on page 100, the “Big Book” authors tell us WE grow spiritually when we “sponsor” someone and help them work the Steps. Page 100, first paragraph:

“Both you and the new man MUST walk DAY BY DAY in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things WILL happen. (Please notice the rest of this paragraph because it contains what some consider the greatest promise in this book) When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God’s hands were better than ANYTHING we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will PRESENTLY (not some far off time and place, but here and now) you will PRESENTLY live in a new and wonderful world, NO MATTER WHAT your present circumstances!”

Now THAT’S freedom! Starting at the bottom of page 100, there are a few statements that may not be very popular to some in our fellowship. You will rarely hear this part of the “Big Book” brought up at meetings. Follow along with me as I read how the authors describe the true freedom and serenity that THOROUGHLY working this ENTIRE Program brings us. Last paragraph, page 100.

“Assuming we are SPIRITUALLY fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn't think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so.

We meet these conditions EVERY day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, STILL has an alcoholic mind; THERE IS SOMETHING THE MATTER WITH HIS SPIRITUAL STATUS. His only chance for sobriety would be some place like the Greenland Ice Cap, and even there an Eskimo might turn up with a bottle of scotch and ruin everything! Ask any woman who has sent her husband to distant places on the theory he would escape the alcohol problem.”

“In our belief ANY scheme of combating alcoholism which proposes to shield the sick man from temptation is doomed to failure. If the alcoholic tries to shield himself he MAY succeed for a time, but he USUALLY winds

up with a bigger explosion than ever. We have tried these methods. These attempts to do the impossible have always failed.

So our rule is not to avoid a place where there is drinking, IF WE HAVE A LEGITIMATE REASON FOR BEING THERE. That includes bars, nightclubs, dances, receptions, weddings, even plain ordinary whoopee parties. To a person who has had experience with an alcoholic, this may seem like tempting Providence, but it isn't.

You will note that we made an important qualification. Therefore, ask yourself on EACH occasion, "Have I ANY good social, business, or personal reason for going to this place? Or am I expecting to steal a little vicarious (which means "second hand") pleasure from the atmosphere of such places?" IF you answer these questions satisfactorily, you need have no apprehension. Go or stay away, whichever seems best. But be SURE you are on SOLID SPIRITUAL ground before you start AND that your motive in going is THOROUGHLY good. Do not think of what you will get out of the occasion. Think of what you can bring to it. But IF you are shaky, you had better work with another alcoholic instead!

Why sit with a long face in places where there is drinking, sighing about the good old days. If it is a happy occasion, try to increase the pleasure of those there; if a business occasion, go and attend to your business enthusiastically. If you are with a person who wants to eat in a bar, by all means go along. Let your friends know they are not to change their habits on your account. At a proper time and place explain to all your friends why alcohol disagrees with you. If you do this thoroughly, few people will ask you to drink. While you were drinking, you were withdrawing from life little by little. Now you are getting back into the social life of this world. Don't start to withdraw again just because your friends drink liquor."

1*****NEXT LEADER*****

If I cannot go to a wedding because alcohol will be served there, then alcohol is STILL telling me what I can and cannot do. That does not sound much like freedom to me. It is important to keep in mind that the authors bring this up ONLY after presenting ALL of the Steps, and assume that the reader has worked them ALL and is spiritually fit as THE result.

God is now our "new Employer." In the last full paragraph on page 102, the Book gives us a new job description:

“Your job NOW is to be at the place where you may be of MAXIMUM helpfulness to others, so NEVER hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid (which means “morally degraded”) spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with THESE motives and GOD will keep you unharmed.” (This is a promise.)

This completes Chapter 7. Like it was said at the beginning of Step Twelve, Chapter 8 “To Wives”, Chapter 9 “The Family Afterwards”, and Chapter 10 “To Employers” ALSO contain MANY tips on how to practice these principles in ALL our affairs, and these chapters contain other points on how to be most effective in dealing with a new member of AA. If what is mentioned in these three chapters works for our family and friends, it can certainly work for us in dealing with people we sponsor. Due to time restraints, we will be unable to highlight these three chapters, so please make yourselves familiar with them.

Just so we can highlight just one point out of these three chapters, please turn to page 120 in the chapter “To Wives”. The “Big Book” authors even tell us what to do if we relapse. The middle of the first full paragraph on page 120 says:

“Though it is infinitely better that he have no relapse at all, as has been true with many of our men, it is by NO means a bad thing IN SOME CASES. Your husband will see at once that he MUST REDOUBLE his SPIRITUAL activities IF he expects to survive. You need not remind him of his spiritual deficiency -- he will know of it.”

Being of service to others is CRITICAL to the continued growth and the maintenance of our sobriety. Keep in mind that one of the PRIMARY services we can perform is to take prospective members through the Twelve Steps, just like we did during these Beginners’ Meetings. Each time we do this, we learn more about this lifesaving program and gain additional insight into the Divine inspiration that is the heart of our new way of life.

Who knows, maybe in a short time, some of you will be back to LEAD these sessions. As we have discovered, conducting these Beginners’ Meetings is a real test of how well we are beginning to know and live the AA program, which is found in the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Now all that's left is to practice these principles in ALL our affairs. What principles? – The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous! They are the principles we practice DAILY for the rest of our lives.

2*****NEXT LEADER*****

Please turn to page 164. The “Big Book” authors conclude with yet one more statement concerning the importance of Divine guidance and the necessity of working with others. On page 164, starting with the first full paragraph, the Book says:

“Still you may say: ‘But I will not have the benefit of contact with you who write this book.’ We cannot be sure. God will determine that, so you MUST remember that your REAL reliance is ALWAYS upon Him. HE will show you how to create the fellowship you crave.”

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will CONSTANTLY disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. (Of course, we CAN’T do this if we DON’T have a morning meditation practice.) The answers will come, IF your OWN house is in order. But OBVIOUSLY you CANNOT transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. THIS is the Great FACT for us.”

“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God (Steps One, Two, and Three). Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows (Steps Four through Seven). Clear away the wreckage of your past (Steps Eight and Nine). Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge (which means “to walk with purpose and effort”) the Road of Happy Destiny.” (Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve)

“May God bless you and keep you – until then.”

We are going to close this session by reading part of page 25. We have waited until now to share this page with you because back when we started this journey, you may not have FULLY understood the significance of what is written here. Having completed the Twelve Steps and having had the spiritual awakening, you are now in a position to see these words from an ENTIRELY new perspective. Your life HAS changed. You now realize, “There Is A Solution.” Page 25, starting with the first full paragraph:

“There IS a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching (Step 4), the leveling of our pride (Steps 6 through 9), the confession of shortcomings (Step 5) which the process REQUIRES for its SUCCESSFUL consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been SOLVED, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found MUCH of heaven and we have been ROCKETED into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.”

“The great FACT is this, and NOTHING less: That we have DEEP AND EFFECTIVE spiritual experiences which have REVOLUTIONIZED our WHOLE attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God’s universe. The CENTRAL fact of our lives today is the ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way which is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could NEVER do by ourselves.”

“If you are as seriously alcoholic as we were, we believe there is no middle-of-the-road solution. We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through HUMAN aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could, and the other, to accept spiritual help.”

We want to welcome each of you who have completed these weekly sessions to the “Sunlight of the Spirit” and “fourth dimension of existence.” We are committed to supporting and encouraging each of you as you move toward working the life-changing design for daily living that is the Twelve Steps. We thank you for providing us with the opportunity to participate in our own recovery, and to be a part of your miraculous spiritual journey.

In closing, we’d like to ask if there are any questions?

(*****Please pause for, and answer any questions*****)

We have some time now and would like to invite anyone up to the front of the room who would like to share with the group any of their experiences with working the Steps during these Beginners’ Meetings. This is an opportunity for sharing the changes that are occurring in your lives as THE

result of having worked the Steps with us over the last few weeks. Would anyone like to come forward?

(*****Please pause and allow for participation*****)