

## A Working Steps 10 & 11 Guide

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Those of you who have done the work up to this point, 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 live 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.

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 says:

"This...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 a 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.

"...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, 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 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".

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 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."

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 yes or no.

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. For some helpful stuff on Step 10 & 11 please go back to the Step 10 & 11 files and read "Step 10 – Not Just At Night" & "Step 11 Morning & Evening Review Worksheet."

Now let's move on to the Eleventh Step. For a list of all the prayers mentioned in the Big Book please go back to the Step 10 & 11 files and read "Step 11 Prayers in the Big Book."

**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? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? 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, or after we've showered and eaten, or 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. (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, dishonesty 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.

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.

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 to 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.

Paragraph two talks about including friends and family in our daily morning spiritual activities, as well as taking advantage of the spiritual literature that religion and spiritual sources outside of A.A. have to offer. There are many powerful things that can help improve our conscious contact. Perhaps ask others what influenced them on THEIR spiritual path.

Page 87, paragraph 3:

"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 11<sup>th</sup> 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.

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 a moment of silence so each of us can make contact with the God of our understanding and see if we receive Guidance 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, dishonest 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." Or, you could simply say this: "Lord, what would you have me do, where would you have me go, what would you have me say and to whom?"

Please spend the next five minutes in uninterrupted silence, relaxing your mind and perhaps waiting for guidance from your Higher Power.

Thank you.

For a few powerful ways to seek guidance from our Higher Power please go back to the Step 10 & 11 files and read “How to Listen to God,” St. Francis Prayer Meditation (12 & 12)” & “St. Francis Prayer Exercise.” Also, see “Step 10 & 11 Retreat Handouts” for many tips on Step 10 & 11.

If something 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!

For another tool that has helped me greatly in seeking & improving conscious contact on my spiritual path and keeps me spiritually accountable to others please go back to the Step 10 & 11 files and see the “Steel On Steel Format.” © 2005 Barefoot Bill L. All rights reserved. Any use or reproduction of this material, in part or any form - for sale, trade or barter - is STRICTLY PROHIBITED unless accompanied with the expressed WRITTEN PERMISSION of the copyright holder. Individuals may make copies for their personal use.