

PREPARING FOR THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWELFTH STEP

THE TWELFTH STEP:

“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.”

Read p.89 of the “Big Book” to the middle of p.96 (ending with “of their chance”) and read p.106 of the “12 & 12” to the bottom paragraph of p.112 (ending with “for many more”).

Review the following ten questions that start on the bottom of p.111 of the “12 & 12” in order see how complete our spiritual awakening has become. Mark “yes” or “no” to each question.

“Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the practice of these principles in all our affairs?”

1. Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety?
2. Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes deranged family lives that we bring to our A.A. group?
3. Can we have the same kind of confidence and faith in these people who have been infected and sometimes crippled by our own illness that we have in our sponsors?
4. Can we actually carry the A.A. spirit into our daily work?
5. Can we meet our newly recognized responsibilities to the world at large?
6. Can we bring new purpose and devotion to the religion of our choice?
7. Can we find new joy of living in trying to do something about all these things?
8. How shall we come to terms with seeming failure or success? Can we now accept and adjust to either without despair or pride?
9. Can we accept poverty, sickness, loneliness, and bereavement with courage and serenity?
10. Can we steadfastly content ourselves with the humbler, yet sometimes more durable, satisfactions when brighter, more glittering achievements are denied us?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

THE TWELFTH STEP:

“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.”

Homework: Writing Inventory on the Twelfth Step, part 1
By Dennis F.

Read p. 89 of the “Big Book” to the middle of p. 96 (ending with “of their chance”) and read p. 106 of the “12 & 12” to the bottom paragraph of p. 112 (ending with “for many more”).

What is a spiritual awakening? Has it happened to me? The answer to these questions is given at the start of Step Twelve in the “12 & 12” at the bottom of p.106:

1. Am I able to do, feel and believe that which I could not do before on my unaided strength and resources alone?
2. Do I feel that life is not a dead end, not something to be endured or mastered?
3. Do I have a degree of honesty, tolerance, unselfishness, peace of mind and love of which I had thought myself incapable?

If the answer to these questions is yes, then I have undergone a spiritual awakening. If I don't yet feel these things in my life, it would be good to review my progress in doing the steps to see where I need improvement.

Following is a description of what should have happened to me for each step as described in the “12 & 12”, pp.107-109:

1. Step One showed us an amazing paradox: We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcoholic obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it.
2. In Step Two we saw that since we could not restore ourselves to sanity, some Higher Power must necessarily do so if we were to survive.
3. Consequently, in Step Three we turned our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. For the time being, we who were atheist or agnostic discovered that our own group, or A.A. as a whole, would suffice as a higher power.
4. Beginning with Step Four, we commenced to search the things in ourselves, which had brought us to physical, moral, and spiritual bankruptcy. We made a searching and fearless moral inventory.

5. Looking at Step Five, we decided that an inventory, taken alone, wouldn't be enough. We knew we would have to quit the deadly business of living alone with our conflicts, and in honesty, confide these to God and another human being.
6. At Step Six, many of us balked – for the practical reason that we did not wish to have all our defects of character removed, because we still love some of them too much. Yet we knew we had to make a settlement with the fundamental principle of Step Six. So we decided that while we still had some flaws of character that we could not yet relinquish, we ought nevertheless to quit our stubborn, rebellious hanging on to them. We said to ourselves, “This I cannot do today, perhaps, but I can stop crying out, ‘No, never!’”
7. Then, in Step Seven, we humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings such as He could or would under the conditions of the day we asked.
8. In Step Eight we continued our housecleaning, for we saw that we were not only in conflict with ourselves, but also with people and situations in the world in which we lived. We had to begin to make our peace, and so we listed the people we had harmed and became willing to set things right.
9. We follow this up in Step Nine by making direct amends to those concerned, except when it would injure them or other people.
10. By this time, at Step Ten, we had begun to get a basis for daily living, and we keenly realized that we would need to continue taking personal inventory, and that when we were in the wrong we ought to admit it promptly.
11. In Step Eleven we saw that if a Higher Power had restored us to sanity and had enabled us to live with some peace of mind in a sorely troubled world, then such a Higher Power was worth knowing better, by as direct contact as possible. The persistent use of meditation and prayer, we found, did open the channel so that where there had been a trickle, there now was a river which led to sure power and safe guidance from God, as we were increasingly better able to understand Him.
12. So, practicing these Steps, we had a spiritual awakening about which finally there was no question. Looking at those who were only beginning and still doubted themselves, the rest of us were able to see the change setting in. From great numbers of such experiences, we could predict that the doubter, who still claimed that he hadn't got the “spiritual angle”, and who still considered his well-loved A.A. group the higher power, would presently love God and call Him by name.

The twelve steps did two things in my life: The first nine steps brought me to a place of peace with my past; steps ten, eleven, and twelve practiced on a daily basis allow me to “match calamity with serenity” (“Big Book”, p. 68) without taking the first drink.

I have heard some wonder why their “love” relationships did not happen or improve during their work on the twelve steps. The answer is that the steps are concerned with “recovery”. It is the traditions that are concerned with relationships.

The twelve traditions are nothing more than a list of twelve areas where alcoholics make mistakes in their relationships. A.A. groups made these mistakes and found they could survive only if they followed the principles that evolved as the twelve traditions. It is the same story on the individual level.

The first forty-five years of Alcoholics Anonymous has been concerned primarily with recovery. We don’t speak about relationships at our meetings very much because we have very few successful ones. Alanon speaks more successfully about relationships.

The study of the principles of the traditions in this series is an attempt to correct this imbalance. We can have as much or as little sobriety as we want to, depending on what lengths we are willing to go.

The traditions teach us to live in unity with all. When our relationships are loving, we want to serve. Thus, the final section of this series is concerned with the twelve areas where our service attitude needs to be improved, the “Twelve Concepts of Service”.

The whole vision of sobriety offered by A.A. is not limited to recovery. Recovery is first, but then we can learn to live in a state of love by practicing the twelve traditions in our life through being of service to each other.

Step ten included the first nine steps of the program on a daily basis: the first three steps keep me in the “now” (Today I am powerless over alcohol, and my life is unmanageable, so I ask God for more sanity and turn my unmanageable life over to His loving care.); step four produces “awareness”; step five produces “forgiveness”; step six produces “surrender” which changes me; step eight produces “willingness”; and step nine produces “oneness”.

The “awareness” I receive in a daily written tenth step tells me where I need to “improve” in my relationship with God; step eleven “improves” that relationship by praying and meditating on that tenth step “awareness”. (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. “12 & 12”, p. 98), and the twelfth step puts this “awareness” into action as the spiritual theme of my day that produces the spiritual growth I need to stay sober.

For example, if I become aware through my nightly written inventory that I was unloving to someone, I meditate the next morning on being loving by examining what I used to be like and then visualizing how I could go out of my way to be loving to someone in the next twenty-four hours.

This meditation leads to spiritual action, and I carry this message to all I meet today. Meditation leads to action, the essence of the twelfth step.

If I express the meaning of A.A. today to me, I can put it in five words, “I grow or I drink.” I grow by practicing steps ten, eleven, and twelve on a daily basis.

The next aspect of the Twelfth Step and the most satisfying one is carrying the message.

God has saved me from an alcoholic death and brought me a long way into sobriety that I may have a message to carry.

Am I ministering to the alcoholic who still suffers, or has my primary purpose become clouded with the comforts of sobriety?

Do I speak when asked? Do I volunteer for less spectacular twelve-step work by taking care of refreshments at meeting or mopping the floor after? Do I serve as a sponsor? Will I supply a “listening ear and an understanding heart” to a suffering newcomer at a meeting? Will I volunteer sometime to answer A.A. phones?

Do I have an attitude of service, which looks for an opportunity to carry the message?

Then I will be able to declare, “that no satisfaction has been deeper, and no job greater than in a Twelfth Step job well done.”

“To watch the eyes of men and women open with wonder as they move from darkness into light, to see their lives quickly fill with a new purpose and meaning, to see whole families reassembled, to see the alcoholic outcast received back into his community in full citizenship, and above all, to watch these people awaken to the presence of a loving God in their lives – these things are the substance of what we receive as we carry A.A.’s message to the next alcoholic.” (“12 & 12”, Twelfth Step, p. 110)

The last question to ask ourselves about our practice of the Twelfth Step, is how we are practicing the principles of the Twelve Steps in all our affairs.

The following list of ten questions that start on the bottom of page 111 of the “12 & 12” form an excellent inventory checklist of how we are practicing the steps in our lives.

“Now comes the biggest question yet. What about the “practice of these principles in all our affairs”?”

1. Can we love the whole pattern of living as eagerly as we do the small segment of it we discover when we try to help other alcoholics achieve sobriety?
2. Can we bring the same spirit of love and tolerance into our sometimes-deranged family lives that we bring to our A.A. group?
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Writing inventory is the A.A. way of becoming surrendered to new awarenesses that lead me to new growth. If we have answered “no” to any of the above questions, let us stop and write inventory concerning it.

INVENTORY EXAMPLE - (Try to condense to three sentences.)

- a) The Story: I could improve my attitude towards areas where I have not yet succeeded.
- b) What did I do wrong? I regard such areas as something to be endured or mastered.
- c) What would God expect me to do instead? I pray for acceptance of “what is” since God wants me to enjoy serving Him.