

PREPARING FOR PART TWO 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.”

1. Is my A.A. life filled with indifference or boredom?
2. What is the state of my emotional security? Do I accept God’s sexual-relationship will for me today?
3. What is the state of my financial security? Do I accept God’s financial will for me today?
4. What is the state of my outlook on personal importance, power, ambition, and leadership? Have I given up my childish grandiose self-serving dreams for a desire to serve? Do I feel self-worth?
5. Sobriety is matching calamity with serenity. Am I doing this on a daily basis?

“UNITY INSURES RECOVERY THROUGH SERVICE”
MEETING OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

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Homework: Writing Inventory on the Twelfth Step, part 2
By Dennis F.

Read the middle of p. 96 of the “Big Book” (beginning with “Suppose now”) through p. 103, and read the bottom of p. 112 of the “12 & 12” (beginning with “Of course”) through p. 125.

Last week we examined the answers to the following questions: What is the test of a spiritual awakening? Has it happened to me? How can I tell if I have done each step properly so that I can have a spiritual awakening? How can I carry the message? How can I tell if I am practicing these principles in all my affairs?

This week, we will continue our examination of the Twelfth Step in regard to practicing principles in four areas of our lives that Bill Wilson writes about beginning at the bottom of p.112 of the “12 & 12” to the end of the chapter. In my opinion, this chapter contains Bill Wilson’s best writing and is most insightful into the problems and solutions of a sober alcoholic practicing these principles in the area of boredom, emotional stability, financial security, and self worth.

1. INDIFFERENCE OR BOREDOM

(Bottom of p.112, “of course...” through p.114)

How do we react when life “suddenly hands us a great big lump that we can’t begin to swallow, let alone digest”? (“12 & 12”, p.113) The only “answer is in still more spiritual development” (“12 & 12”, p.114) “When we are willing to place spiritual growth first – then, and only then, do we have a real chance.” (“12 & 12”, p.114)

If I am not placing my spiritual growth first, I two-step instead of working all the steps. I do the first and twelfth step and neglect self-examination, prayer and mediation, asking God to remove my defects, practicing the qualities I lack, and making amends.

It is easy to get into the rut of going to meetings and twelve stepping if a newcomer comes my way and calling this sobriety. It isn’t long before indifference and boredom sets in.

The answer is that I am failing to grow spiritually by working the entire program. Not only practicing recovery through working all the steps, but going further and practicing the

principle of the “Twelve Traditions” and “Twelve Concepts of Service” in all my relationships.

“We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.” (“Big Book”, p.82)
The question that really needs to be asked is “am I placing spiritual growth first or my comfort first?”

The problems that I encounter in life bear direct relationship to my lack of spiritual growth due to the step, tradition, or concept of service I am on that I am not practicing.

When I gave up personal comfort as my goal and embraced spiritual growth instead because I could be more helpful to others, I found that I didn’t have time to be indifferent or bored.

2. EMOTIONAL STABILITY

(Top of p.115, “After we come...” to the middle of p.120, ending with “joys in return”.)

When I drank I tried “To find emotional security by being dominating or dependent upon others (“12&12”, p.116). “Either we had tried to play God and dominate those about us, or we had insisted on being over dependent upon them (“12 & 12”, p.115).

My self-will had driven people from me when I drank, and I became isolated. In sobriety, “we saw that we would need to give constantly of ourselves without demands for repayment.” (“12 & 12”, p.116)

Through spiritual growth, “we discovered the best possible source of emotional stability to be God Himself. We found that dependence upon His perfect justice, forgiveness, and love was healthy, and that it would work where nothing else would.” (“12 & 12”, p.116)

Emotional stability is then discussed in this chapter in three situations: Marriages can be saved by a partner who becomes sober if he “takes up his marriage responsibilities with a willingness to repair what he can and accept what he can’t,” and if he “persistently tries all of A.A.’s Twelve Steps in his home.” (“12 & 12”, p.119)

Single sober alcoholics can succeed in marriage to fellow A.A.’s. “The prospective partners need to be solid A.A.’s and long enough acquainted to know that their compatibility at spiritual, mental and emotional levels is a fact and not wishful thinking.” (“12 & 12”, p.119)

I was fortunate to meet my wife at the end of her drinking, and she rapidly embraced the A.A. program which has made our marriage very solid.

Those A.A. members who do not marry or are temporarily single do not need to feel lonely, hurt, or left out. A.A. can offer satisfactions of worth and durability.

“Surrounded by so many A.A. friends, these so-called loners tell us they no longer feel alone. In partnership with others – women and men – they can devote themselves to any number of

ideas, people, and constructive projects. Free of marital responsibilities, they can participate in enterprises which would be denied to family men and women. We daily see such members render prodigies of service, and receive great joys in return.” (“12 & 12”, p.120)

3. FINANCIAL SECURITY

(Middle of p.120, “Where the possession...” to the middle of p.122, ending with “freedom from want.”)

These two pages deserve reading and rereading when any of us alcoholics become obsessed with money problems. Bill Wilson astutely describes our financial history and then succinctly prescribes a spiritual remedy.

When we drank, “we acted as if the money supply was inexhaustible; through between binges we would sometimes go to the other extreme and become almost miserly. Without realizing it, we were just accumulating funds for the next spree.” (“12 & 12”, p.120)

Then when we became sober, we reversed our attitudes. “Financial importance was no longer our principal aim; we now clamored for material security...we forgot God. In money matters, we had faith only in ourselves, and not much of that. (“12 & 12”, p.121)

The answer is in our motive and attitude toward money. Do I use my talents as a means of giving loving service or hoarding money?

If I desire financial independence more “than a right dependence upon God” (“12 & 12”, p.121) I will continue to be fearful about money. I then find that the degree of my happiness is in direct proportion to my bank balance or lack of it.

“It did not matter too much what our material condition was, but it did matter what our spiritual condition was. Money gradually became our servant and not our master. It became a means of exchanging love and service with those about us... we found that freedom from fear was more important than freedom from want” (“12 & 12”, p.122)

I believe that God has given me the tools and talents to be self-supporting in any situation in sobriety. He did not get me sober to shoot me down over finances.

Rather, through inventory, I have found that fear of insufficient money never threatened me so much as fear of what others would say about me if I didn’t succeed financially. I was fearful of what my peers would say about me if I went bankrupt.

I was more concerned about my pride than I was my actual financial condition! When I discovered this through written inventory, my financial fears disappeared. As I placed emphasis on working the steps, traditions, and concepts of service, I found my financial problems clearing up by themselves.

We found that we could not place money first. For us, material well-being always followed spiritual progress; it never preceded.” (“Big Book, p.127) If I want to succeed financially, I can help myself most be completing my inventory or whatever step, tradition, or concept I am currently on. I also do those things that God places in my path, such as getting a job and going to work, a day at a time.

“God has an unlimited supply of cash! When He wants my undivided attention, He speaks to me through financial problems, relationship problems, or puts me flat on my back in a sickbed. The lesson is always the same: to learn dependence on a Higher Power rather than on money, property, and prestige or people, places and things!”

Nothing has been so helpful to me in dealing with financial challenges as the last two paragraphs of page 121 in the “12 & 12” that conclude this section on financial security and the sober alcoholic:

“When a job still looked like a mere means of getting money rather than an opportunity for service, when the acquisition of money for financial independence looked more important than a right dependence upon God, we were still the victims of unreasonable fears. And these were fears which would make a serene and useful existence, at any financial level, quite impossible.”

“But as time passed, we found that with the help of A.A.’s Twelve Steps, we could lose those fears, no matter what our material prospects were. We could cheerfully perform humble labor without worrying about tomorrow. If our circumstances happened to be good, we no longer dreaded a change for the worse, for we had learned that these troubles could be turned into great values. It did not matter too much what our material condition was, but it did matter what our spiritual condition was. Money gradually became our servant and not our master. It became a means of exchanging love and service with those about us. When, the God’s help, we calmly accept our lot, then we found we could live at peace with ourselves and show others who still suffered the same fears that they could get over them, too. We found that freedom from fear was more important than freedom from want.”

4. SELF WORTH

(Middle of p.122, “Let’s here take note...” to the top of p.125 ending with “grace of God.”)

When drinking, I tried to find self worth through personal importance, power, ambition, wealth, being a dictator, and grandiosity.

I was really childish, overly sensitive, and full of grandiose dreams. “We simply had to be number one people to cover up our deep-lying inferiorities.” (“12 & 12”, p.123)

Now sober, I don’t have to dominate to feel self-worth or self-importance. “We no longer seek fame and honor in order to be praised. When by devoted service to family, friends, business or community we attract widespread affection and sometimes are singled out for posts of greater responsibility and trust, we try to be humbly grateful and exert ourselves the

more in a spirit of love and service. True leadership, we find, depends upon able example and not upon vain displays of power or glory.” (“12 & 12”, p.124)

Ambition has new meaning for me. “True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humble under the grace of God.” (“12 & 12”, p.124-5)

I do not need to be famous or praised to feel self-worth. I know that God needs me. I am His experience, strength, and hope to the alcoholic message.

If I were not important to God, He would not have kept me from an alcoholic death so that I could serve Him in sobriety. I have been awakened to my greatest talent, my alcoholism. I used to think it was my music and entrepreneurial talents. Now, I know that the gift of my sobriety is my greatest talent.

God knows that I need Him to survive sober.

But I also know that God needs me to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all my affairs.

Whenever I feel lack of self-worth, I immediately get over it when I remind myself of my importance to God’s plan by saying these three words to myself, “God needs me.”

I like one of the closing sentences of the Twelfth Step of the “12 & 12” that describes what my attitude is to be in practicing the Twelfth Step: “Understanding is the key to right principles and attitudes, and right action is the key to good living; therefore, the joy of good living is the theme of A.A.’s Twelfth Step.” (“12 & 12”, p.125)

Writing inventory is the A.A. way of becoming surrendered to new awarenesses that lead to new growth.

Let us write inventory on any of the four areas we have just discussed if we are having difficulty with them: boredom, emotional contentment, financial acceptance, or self-worth.

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

- a) The Story: My financial attitudes could be better.
- b) What did I do wrong? I think in terms of lack financially rather than contentment.
- c) What would God have me do instead next time? Praise God for looking out for me financially and learn to enjoy what I have!