

THE GOOD SHEPHERD GUIDE TO THE STEPS



A practical program
for a spiritual way of life

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About Us

Good Shepherd Anglican Church is a life-changing fellowship of men, women and children who share their experience, strength and faith with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from chronic sin and addiction. Our primary purpose is to love God and to help others come to know the love of God through Jesus Christ, by following the way of life described in the New Testament and practiced in the 12 Steps.

Our Common Problem (—and Solution)

(an excerpt from Paul's letter to the Romans, Ch. 7)

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do. I know that nothing good lives in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, thank God!

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Introduction to the 12 Steps

The earliest Christians were known as followers of the Way. That is an ambiguous phrase because it means that they followed Jesus, who himself is the Way, as well as following the way of life preached by Christ and his apostles. Our program is all about defining that way of life and how to live it out in communion with others.

Upholding and continuing apostolic teaching is an integral part of the call that is upon the body of Christ, the Church. Because of the assault on the faith over the last century, orthodox believers have spent the greater part of their time and resources defending *what* we believe and *why* we believe it. In the process the typical Christian church has sorely neglected *how* we live out that faith on a day-to-day basis.

Here's what the Rev. Sam Shoemaker noted years ago in his article *Groups That Work: A "Christian Program."*

Take two men in a typical congregation. I asked one of them about trying to carry his faith to others, and he said it would take him a long time to learn enough to do such a thing. I said to him, "Would you please tell me what on earth you've been doing in this church for twenty years?" Another man said to me one day, "I have been coming to this church all my life and I still don't know what it's all about."

*Now both these men said the Creed, and I think they believed it. They believed in the institution of the Church, supported it, came to it with considerable regularity. But no one could say that either of them had "got the program." For all their exposure to church services and church work, nothing had pulled the whole thing together, **made it seem practical, and given them a working method of growing in the Christian life.***

A working program is a technique, a set of spiritual habits one can adopt and pursue regularly to keep his spiritual life growing. When Jesus told Nicodemus, a churchgoing, religious man, that he needed a life so

different from the one he had that it was like being born all over again, and that unless this happened he would not see the Kingdom of God, Nicodemus' first question was, "How ...?" He didn't ask "Why" and he didn't ask "What," he asked "How." The Church has, on the whole, given people more answers to "why" and to "what" than it has to "how." Yet the "how" is the practical method that gets us going and keeps us going.

Good Shepherd's program is about the "how." When we studied Scripture we saw how pale the life of the Church is now compared to what it was in the times of the apostles. We don't just mean all the miracles, we mean in terms of conversion experiences (Titus 3:3-6; 1 Cor 6:9-11) and the quality of the early Christians' relationships, to God and within their community (Acts). The Church met in one another's houses every day for fellowship and communion. They confessed their sins, one to another. Pious Jews, who were already tithing to the temple, sold off property to support the ministry of the apostles. They all recognized that they were sinners redeemed by Christ. They prayed with and for one another. They devoted themselves to learning as much as they could about the good news and to helping one another. And they were happy, joyous people. They loved what they were doing.

Inspired by their example, we seek to follow the principles for personal and communal living that we find reported in Scripture among the earliest generations of Christians. It's not as though we're the only ones to try this. The Oxford Groups (see **Endnotes**) initially did this. In fact, early on they described themselves as a "first century Christian community." From the Bible they distilled the 4 Absolutes for Christian living, Absolute Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness, and Love. They also had the Four Spiritual Activities, Five C's, Twenty-eight Ideas, and Seven Principles. Of these various tenets, AA borrowed: "the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution to those harmed, helpfulness to others, and the necessity of belief in and dependence upon God." (Big Book, Third Edition, p. xiii)

Actually, the first AAs were Oxford Group members. AA itself was a direct outgrowth of the movement. With the coaching of the Rev. Sam Shoemaker, they came up with the 12 Steps based on the same Biblical principles. Shoemaker later wrote an article, *What the Church has to Learn from Alcoholics Anonymous*. That is worth reading. It explains in large measure the motivation behind what we are doing with this program. Also worth reading is *Twelve Steps to Power*. The Shoemaker quotes introducing each step in this guide are taken from that article.

Like Shoemaker, some of us recognize in AA groups a liveliness of the

Holy Spirit at work, which is too often missing from churches. The fellowship of AA has a level of commitment and caring, forgiveness and compassion, dedication to action, good humor and real humility, transparency, accountability, and authenticity among its members, which we think should be evident in our church communities. We want to have all of that in our church fellowship.

On the other hand, as Christians, we recognize the poverty of understanding that many AAs have in their relationship with God—what many of them call their “higher power”—because they do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Ironically, they may know him without knowing that they know him—much like the Greeks in Athens that Paul spoke to (Acts 17:16-34). They worshiped a God they did not know. So too, we hope eventually to be able to introduce AAs to the God they have experienced without knowing who He really is.

But first we must get our own house in order by establishing and continuing to cultivate a lively faith personally and communally. We find that by practicing the 12 Steps we come to know Jesus Christ in a profoundly personal way as our Savior* (Steps 1-2), our Lord** (Steps 3-11), and our Friend*** (Step 12)—whereby we become his co-workers and are sent as he was sent, carrying the message to others. (*Mt. 18:11; **Mt. 28:18; ***Jn 15:15).

Here is how the Big Book (pages 58-60) of AA introduces the steps. While the Big Book language is limited to *alcohol*, *alcoholic*, and *alcoholism*, we use *addiction or chronic sin* and *addict or chronic sinner* in our working of the steps.

How it Works

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.

Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want what

we have and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.

Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!

Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.

Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:

- Step 1 - We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable*
- Step 2 - Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves, could restore us to sanity*
- Step 3 - Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him*
- Step 4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves*
- Step 5 - Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs*
- Step 6 - Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character*
- Step 7 - Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings*
- Step 8 - Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all*
- Step 9 - Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others*
- Step 10 - Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it*
- Step 11 - Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out*
- 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*

Many of us exclaimed, "What an order! I can't go through with it." Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Our description of the alcoholic, the chapter to the agnostic, and our personal adventures before and after make clear three pertinent ideas:

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.*
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.*
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.*

To do the steps, therefore, requires two decisions.

"If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it – then you are ready to take certain steps."

"Willing to go to any length" is inspired by the language of Jesus Christ when he invites people to become his disciples.

Luke 9:23-25

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?"

Jesus says that you have to be willing to give up everything ("all your old ideas")—deny self, family, the world, etc.—which itself echoes the ultimate commandment—to love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, *all* your mind, *all* your strength ("half measures availed us nothing").

"If you have decided you want we have"— consider the promises found in the Big Book of AA (pp. 83-84). Promises of the results you can expect if you follow the program of action:

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development [Step 9], we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain

interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

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 is how we have been blessed through this program. Do you want what we have? These blessings are yours if you want them. Are you really ready to surrender? Are you willing to go to any length? If “yes,” then you are ready to take these steps with us. The strength you will need to practice them will come from God so long as you seek Him.

Prayer before taking the steps on page 59 of the Big Book:

“We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.”

If we approach the steps with the understanding that our God is the God who has revealed Himself in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ, then we will find nothing in the 12 Steps that conflicts with Scripture.

Here are the actions that need to be taken:

- personally identifying with the problem of sin as described by Paul in Romans 7;
- a commitment to turn one's life and will over to the care of God;
- confession of sin;
- restitution and reconciliation;
- continually growing in one's relationship to God through prayer and personal devotions;
- sharing the good news and this spiritual way of life with others;
- practicing its principles in all areas of one's life.

The 12 Steps provide a methodical way to apply the scriptural principles Christians already espouse. This guide is filled with quotations from the Bible. I hope they will provide inspiration, increase understanding, enable a more profound application of each step, and demonstrate to Christian and non-Christian alike the Biblical nature of this program.

The steps are spiritual tools that supply the means of recovery for the addict or for anyone who struggles with chronic sin, that is to say, everyone (1 John 1:8). They move one from self-centeredness to God-centeredness, from a self-reliance that doesn't work to a God-reliance that does. The steps help us make room for God in our lives and for the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

It is the only program I know that embodies the Biblical concept that we see in Christ's commission of the twelve apostles in Matthew 10:8, where he says, "Freely you have received, freely give." You begin the process as one desperately in need of recovery. By the twelfth step you have become one who ministers to others. The program of recovery, then, is also a program for discipleship, for ongoing spiritual formation, and ministry training. There is a clear understanding that one needs to help others as much as they need to be helped. "Faith without works was dead, he said. For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that." (Big Book, pages 14-15)

If all Christians practiced these steps on a consistent basis, they would become more like Christ—and so would the Church.

STEP ONE

"We admitted we were powerless over alcohol [or, chronic sin and addiction]—that our lives had become unmanageable."

As you read those words, you may be thinking, "I never touch alcohol," or "I can handle it all right." But does it take a great step of imagination to see that first step as applying to a very much wider range of problems than alcohol? What about the people with an ungoverned temper, who make a hell out of their home, or their office, because they have never learned to manage their own dispositions? What about the men and women whose passions drive them to wrong expressions of human love, and who are as much slaves to sex as anyone was ever a slave to drink?

What about those in whose lives fear reigns like a tyrant -- fear of people, fear of the future, fear of want, fear of death, fear of failure, fear so deep-seated and widespread within them that it seems to pervade everything? Are not their lives also "powerless" and "unmanageable," just as much so as if they got drunk? Are they not drunk on fear?

Or think of the people in whose lives hate and resentment are found. I heard the other day of a family where a mother and son have ganged up on a daughter and her husband, and no offers of reconciliation on their part meet with anything but rebuff. Are not their lives quite as unmanageable, really, as any drunkard's? Do they not drink in great, self-destroying draughts of hate and bitterness quite as real, quite as devastating to one's self and others, as alcohol ever was? Make the transfer!

I remember the first time I ever went into a rescue mission. God forgive me, my first thought was to be glad I was not like those men. But it was not long till I came to know that Christ was much harder on the sins of righteous and respectable people than He was on harlots and prodigals. Your life and mine can be quite as unmanageable as an alcoholic's may be through liquor. — Sam Shoemaker

The key Bible passage for Step 1 is from Romans 7. It is a classic. It describes our common problem. It is the *human* condition, not just the alcoholic condition. It means that we *all* have this problem.

Romans 7:15-24

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am!

“We admitted we were powerless over _____—that our lives had become unmanageable.” How can you fill in the blank? The common element is something that is harmful and compulsive, something you have tried and failed to abstain from or to control. It could involve a substance—food, drink, pills, etc. It might be a behavior—reckless spending, sex, gambling, obsessive control, workaholism, compulsive Internet use, codependence, etc. The obsession may be mental—a person(s), fears, negative projections, resentments, the drive to succeed, shame. How do you identify with what Paul describes in Romans 7?

Are you ready to surrender unconditionally, like a fighter who knows he's licked and wisely throws in the towel? Better still is the image of a swimmer who thought he was stronger than the riptide, but finally recognizes his helplessness and waves to the lifeguard to save him from

drowning. That's where you need to be. So long as you think that you, on your own power, can fix *it, them, or you*, then you are not ready. This is a God-help program, not a self-help program. Are you ready to take the first step?

If this seems to make no sense to you and your life, then try to affirm the opposite—*I have power over everything in my life and nothing makes my life unmanageable*. Maybe it will help bring you around to Step 1.

Coming into right relationship with God **requires** that we accurately assess our hopeless condition. **Unless you own that simple fact about yourself, you can never know Jesus**. For most Christians, salvation is an abstraction. For recovered AAs, it is a reality. This step demands profound humility and honest recognition of utter failure in the face of sin. Powerlessness and unmanageability are the key words.

II Corinthians 1:8

We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Acknowledging our true condition opens us up to God's saving grace.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

STEP TWO

"Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

AA often calls God or Christ a "Power greater than ourselves" because many people have formed unhappy associations with organized religions, and they do not want to stir up needless antagonisms. They want to draw needy men and women within the range of cure and recovery. Perhaps we all ought to be drawn to God by the fact that He is God, by the beauty of His perfection and the power of His love. But the simple fact is, most of us do not seek God till we need Him.

We find out through bitter experience that life does not come out when you ignore Him. You find you get into difficulties you cannot solve by yourself. So you begin seeking for God.

How do we come to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity? By looking at some people who have had the experience. Faith is better caught by contagion than taught by

instruction. It is an amazing thing to come into a company of Alcoholics Anonymous and hear testimony to the difference that has been wrought in their lives. It should be an amazing thing to come into a company of Christians in church, and at times it is. Beside its worship services, every church should also have informal gatherings where people seeking faith can hear personal witness from believers, and where they can ask questions and have them answered. — Sam Shoemaker

By faith they overcame

Hebrews 11:32-34

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

How do we come to the kind of faith that is necessary for our relationship with God and the power we need to overcome?

The witness of Scripture can grow faith

John 20:31-31

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

It is part of God's plan that the witness of others will inspire faith

Mark 16:9-14

Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. And she went and told them that she had been with him; as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

Get a good life-application Bible with lots of notes and read the Gospels—and believe. Listen to what other people are saying about the

changes God is making in their lives, spend time with them—and believe; believe it can happen for you.

Witness what God has already done in your life

The Scripture says that God has been taking care of us even while we were sinning against Him.

Romans 5:8b

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

You ought to be able, therefore, to look over your own life and see where God already has been taking care of you, and to build your faith on his works in your life to date. Write up a personal God “résumé.” Recall His works in your life when you pray, and direct your prayers to Him.

Seeing is believing

John 2:23

When Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover Feast, many believed in him after seeing the wonders which He was doing.

What wonders (miracles) has he done in your life?

We can ask God to help us overcome our unbelief

Mark 9:15-24

When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes." Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Ask God to show Himself in your life

God is patient with us. He understands we need faith-builders. See how He accommodated Gideon. This is such a great story.

Judges 6:36-40

Gideon said to God, "If you will save Israel by my hand as you have promised—look, I will place a wool fleece on the threshing floor. If there is dew only on the fleece and all the ground is dry, then I will know that you will save Israel by my hand, as you said." And that is what happened. Gideon rose early the next day; he squeezed the fleece and

wrung out the dew—a bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, "Do not be angry with me. Let me make just one more request. Allow me one more test with the fleece. This time, make the fleece dry and the ground covered with dew." That night God did so. Only the fleece was dry; all the ground was covered with dew.

God will restore us to sanity—it says it right there in His book

2 Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Insanity is described in the Big Book as “a lack of proportion, of the ability to think straight” (p. 37). Insanity in this context, then, refers to defective mental processes, which the Bible recognizes as well.

What is “double-mindedness”—going back and forth between doing God’s will and following our own—but the inability “to think straight”?

Jesus says it makes us unfit for the kingdom of God. According to James it makes us unstable in *all* our ways.

Luke 9:6

But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

James 1: 6b, 8

... he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. ... he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Dr. Silkworth, in “The Doctor’s Opinion,” writes that alcoholics cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. Every sinner rationalizes his behavior. It is a form of self-justification.

Isaiah 5:20-21

*Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.*

*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes
and clever in their own sight.*

Not exactly sane thinking, and yet this describes the universal human condition when we sin—which we all do. Wouldn’t you agree that anytime we think we know better than God we’re kind of crazy? And yet,

how often do we do just that?

We are transformed by the renewal of our minds

Romans 12:1b-2

Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Notice the threefold nature of recovery reflected here: physical, mental, and spiritual. Also, note how Step 2 leads us into Step 3.

STEP THREE

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him."

Do you know what most people do who think they believe in God? They stand right where they are and ask God to bless what they are doing. They do not turn their wills and lives over to God, tell Him they are willing to change and be different and ask Him what He wants them to do. That is why many professing Christians are not converted and why they have no power. It is also why AA is such a challenge to the rest of us.

The great philosopher and psychologist William James said, "The crisis, of self-surrender has always been and must always be regarded the vital turning-point of the religious life." Self-surrender is man's part in his own conversion. We cannot and do not convert ourselves; we offer ourselves to God in surrender, and He does the converting by His Holy Spirit, bringing us forgiveness and new life.

How many persons have I seen make that decision, take that step, and as a result find God and His power in their lives! Have you ever done that? Will you do it now? — Sam Shoemaker

Recognize that you already have a god/gods running your life, and choose the God revealed in Scripture instead

Joshua 24:14-15

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the

gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.

We are designed to serve something/someone greater than ourselves. In whom or what have you been putting your faith? What or whom are you serving instead of the true God? Self, career, family, mammon, ...?

You must be devoted to God alone

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

The example of Christ

Luke 22:42

*“Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless **not my will, but thine, be done.**”*

Be teachable, not stubborn

Psalms 32:8-10

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the LORD, mercy shall surround him.

Unconditional and total surrender

Luke 9:23

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

Matthew 10:37

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Decisions are sealed by obedient action

Matthew 4:18-20

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed

him.

People often say, “Okay, I’ve made a decision to turn my will and my life over to God. What do I do now?” Answer: “Steps 4 through 12.”

Abandon yourself to God—body, mind and spirit

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Immerse yourself in the written Word of God; saturate your mind with it; get used to His voice, His thoughts, and His ways, and by His Spirit you will recognize His promptings, and your will will join with God’s.

The Lord’s Prayer (“thy will be done”)

Third Step (Lordship) prayer in the Big Book, p. 63

God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will.

*Take away my difficulties, **that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life.** May I do Thy will always!*

St Francis Prayer—another great “Third Step” or “Lordship” prayer

Lord, make me a channel of your peace, that where there is hatred, I may bring love; that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of forgiveness; that where there is discord, I may bring harmony; that where there is error, I may bring truth; that where there is doubt, I may bring faith; that where there is despair, I may bring hope; that where there are shadows, I may bring light; that where there is sadness, I may bring joy.

Lord, grant that I may seek rather to comfort than to be comforted; to understand, than to be understood; to love, than to be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is by dying that one awakens to Eternal Life. Amen.

STEP FOUR

"We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

How does one do that?

If we compare ourselves with other people. we shall probably come off advantageously. But if we take the Ten Commandments, or Jesus' commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, we shall see the vast difference between what they enjoin and what we are and do. Let us look fearlessly at that very difference; for that difference is the measure of the sin in us which needs to be repented of by us and forgiven by God.

Many of us stand aghast at the mounting corruption in this land, the dishonesty, graft, chiseling, using high place for personal advantage, the increase in narcotics and crime among young people. I wonder in how many instances these people have ever heard the claims of Christ placed squarely and tellingly before them. How many of them have ever heard anyone witness about what Christ has done for him? How many have ever faced themselves morally, and found out exactly what their needs are?

The place to begin spiritually is not with our virtues. That makes us prigs and Pharisees. It is with our sins and needs, for that gives us an honest basis on which to proceed. — Sam Shoemaker

Sins are obstacles to God's grace

Isaiah 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Self-examination

2 Corinthians 13:5

Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!

1 Corinthians 11:28

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Fearlessly face yourself

Psalms 4:4

Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still.

Be thorough

Psalms 77:6

I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.

Intention: repentance

Psalm 119:59

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

Lamentations 3:40

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Consider the benefits

1 Corinthians 11:31

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

Galatians 6:4

But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

Ask God to help you

Psalm 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

This is a very God-connected step, but a lot of people miss that because they get so involved in writing up their inventories. Nevertheless, there are several distinct points where the Big Book clearly instructs us to pray to God and seek His counsel. See the top of p. 67 and para. 1; para. 1 and 3 on p. 68; para. 2, 3, 4 on p. 69 to the top of p. 70; para. 2 on p. 70.

Fourth Step Forms

There are numerous Fourth Step formats that people have developed based on the outline and the suggestions in the Big Book. They range from strict adherence to the Big Book to highly creative versions. Research of early AA indicates that there was no one-and-only way the founders used exclusively to do a Fourth Step. The writers of the Big Book also acknowledge that they “know only a little” and that “God will constantly disclose more.” So, while we want to be respectful of the directions in the Big Book, we don’t want to fall into a slavish legalism that the writers never intended. It’s the spirit that counts the most. And the spirit is to be fearless and thorough. Whatever approach you use, make sure it is the one that most helps you fulfill the spirit of the step, and remember to say every one of the Fourth Step prayers.

Internet searches for the following will provide you with a range of formats. Hopefully you will find one that works well for you:

AA The Original Way, California Fourth Step, 155 Fourth Step Questions, BBA Fourth Step, The Idiot's Guide to the Big Book.

Overview: Doing Steps 4 and 5 is to be relieved of the sin.
Doing Steps 6 and 7 is to be relieved of the sinning.

STEP FIVE

"We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

We can easily understand confessing to God, but why include another human being? Why include him? I think it is because the deepest need of our hearts is our pride, especially the pride of thinking we can manage our own lives without human help. When you go to a priest, a counselor, or just an understanding Christian friend, and open up to him the exact nature of your wrongdoings, you then know you are sincere in wanting to overcome them.

Some kind of confession is good and necessary for us all. If we took such action in time, many of us would avoid the necessity to seek psychiatric help later on. It is a cleansing, releasing experience to talk out one's whole situation with another human being, omitting nothing of the facts. Something left untold can stay in the mind to break out later in defeat. Let us be fearlessly honest in our inventory and in our admissions to another human being. — Sam Shoemaker

To God

2 Samuel 24:10

And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

Psalms 51:1-2

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

To ourselves

Psalms 51:3

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

To another human being

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

Accountability (get a confessor/sponsor)

The witness of Scripture tells us that because of man's fallen nature, we all need having the truth spoken into our lives by someone outside of ourselves. Peter needed Paul (Galatians 2:11-21) and Jesus (Matthew 16:22-23). Paul needed Christ (Acts 9:1-9). The Northern Kingdom of Israel needed Amos (Amos 4-6). David needed Nathan (2 Samuel 12). Christians need other Christians (Galatians 6:1).

Confess—and forsake—sin

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will obtain mercy.

Unconfessed sins hurt us

Psalms 32:3-4

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

Reasons to be fearless

1 John 1:8-9

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Isaiah 1:18

Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

Psalms 103:12

*As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Be sorry

Psalms 38:18

For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

Be thorough

Psalms 32:5

I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

Pray for forgiveness

Psalm 25:11

For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

Be humble

Luke 5:8

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Psalm 51:17

A humble and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise

Verse 17 holds one of the most profound messages in the Bible. See how it reveals God's nature to us. What a relief to those of us weighed down by the shame of our sin. It also serves as a model for us to follow in our relationships with others. Since God welcomes those with a humble and contrite heart, so we must welcome them too.

Luke 18:13-14

And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

STEP SIX

"We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character."

Most of us justify our wrongdoings and excuse them. Even when we admit them, we do not quite want to give them up. Would that we could come to the point of desperation which alcoholics reach, where they are ready to do anything to get victory!

Sin hides behind immaturity. We keep up a fence of protection, then when we are found out we whimper like babies. But when we take down the fence of protection, and let another know us well, we are through with shams and self-deception and the attempt to deceive others, and even God.

It will take some prayer to get to this place, where we want God to take the sin out of us, all of it, and for good. We will wrestle with ourselves a

good deal, before it happens. It will not happen in a day, but the decision that we want it to happen can take place in five minutes.

— Sam Shoemaker

What are defects of character?

Romans 7:18

*I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in **my sinful nature.***

God's revelation through Scripture is that all humans after the Fall are sinful by nature, fatally flawed. The common and essential defect in our character is that we are self-centered instead of God-centered. By contrast, the quintessential asset of Jesus Christ's character is his total obedience to the will of the Father. Besides the original sin we inherit from Adam and Eve, there are other character defects that we may or may not share with others.

Many people list various kinds of behaviors or attitudes as defects of character. The *12 & 12* (p. 42) makes clear what the writer of the Big Book had in mind. (And by the way, when asked what the difference was between "defects," "shortcomings," and "exact nature of our wrongs," Bill Wilson said there is no difference. He just didn't want to keep repeating the same word over and over again.) He describes the defects as our God-given instincts for sex, material and emotional security, and companionship—our place in society—gone awry. This view is strongly reminiscent of C. S. Lewis' description of human will as "a good bent." It is imperative the reader understand the point Wilson is making here. If the defects are indeed instincts—"our great natural assets"—gone wrong, then the concept of removal has to be tempered. This is not going to be amputation. God is not going to strip us of the very instincts we need to survive and thrive. Some people wonder at how the drinking could be removed from us entirely but not so the defects of character. This is the reason why: The drinking can be amputated because we don't need it. Defects, however, are distortions of instincts that are yet necessary. They must be transformed. We can't do that. But what we can expect is that God will redeem them, unbend them, if you will, recreate them in us so that they function properly. It's not unlike orthodontics. The teeth stay; they just get put into proper alignment. So the question becomes, as you review the distorted expression of instincts in your own life, are you willing to have God restore them to their proper place and function?

Prepare your mind

1 Peter 1:13

*Therefore, **prepare your minds for action**; be self-controlled; **set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed.***

A large part of the unwillingness to have defects of character removed that you hear people admit—and good for them for being so honest—comes from not making clear the distinction between *instinct* and *instinct gone wrong*. People are rightly reluctant to have something removed which they know they need. Our basic instincts do need to be satisfied. The problem is that we think our distorted behavior is the only way to satisfy an instinct. We wrongly equate that behavior's removal with the instinct's removal. Faced with that, who would ever become willing? As we discover the healthy function of these instincts we become willing to have the defects removed. Becoming aware of and contemplating positive alternative ways for these instincts to function and be satisfied is tremendously helpful to becoming willing to have God remove the defects.

Be encouraged by the witness and promise of Scripture

Philippians 1:6

He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Psalms 37:4-5

Delight yourself in the LORD

and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD;

trust in him and he will do this

2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

Titus 3:3-6

We also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Willingness—ours and God's

Isaiah 1:19

If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land.

Luke 5:12-13

While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

John 5:5-8

One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?" "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk."

Proper use of will

Romans 12:2

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Keep the memory green—remember when you tried to fix yourself in the past

Romans 7:18b

I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.

Maybe it will take a Romans 7:24 moment, hitting bottom on a character defect the way you did with your addiction.

Romans 7:24

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

The temptation to fix ourselves, once we have completed the first five steps, can prove insidious and compelling. Usually by this point there has been tangible improvement in our mental/emotional life as well as our spiritual life. There might even be progress in our physical life. It's easy (again, this can be quite subtle) to start thinking that now that you know what's been the problem, now that you are no longer engaging in the chronic sin or addiction, now that you know what's wrong with you as a result of the inventories, now that you have cleaned house—you're ready to go. You just won't do those things anymore, you just won't have those ugly thoughts and resentments anymore, you won't have those fears,

you won't be self-centered, you won't harm anyone, etc. You've been restored to sober and sane living. You are now capable of the moral effort that eluded you in the past.

Some of us have fallen for this. Even though we knew better, we succumbed to acting as if we could will ourselves into the recovery we need. We discovered we could not. For some of us it led to some very desperate moments, hitting another bottom in recovery, needing to make another—more profound—surrender in order to let God do for us what we indeed found we could not do for ourselves. That is how some of us “became willing to have God remove these defects of character.” May it not be so with you. But if you do wind up feeling like everything is falling apart some time after Step Five, remember what you have read here and think, “I’m not having a breakdown, I’m having a breakthrough.” You have finally become willing to have God do the work. Hit your knees and, believe me, then you will *humbly* ask God to remove your shortcomings.

STEP SEVEN

"We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

There is, I dare say, no moment of comparable importance in the soul's history to this, when in humility and honesty we tell God in prayer that we want Him to take us over, remove our sins, and change our lives. Lots of life-long Christians have avoided the challenge of doing this because they wanted to play safe. There is prayer that means little; we say the words, but do not back them up by our real intentions. Then there is prayer in which we hurl our lives after our prayers, and mean what we say.

When you have isolated that pride, that fear, that contemptuousness, that resentment, that lust, called it by name, and asked God to remove it from your life, meaning what you say with all the resolve you can command, then you mean business and you are on the way.

— Sam Shoemaker

Be humble—and ask

James 4:10

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Be specific—name it

Mark 10:46-52

As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

Notice that Jesus asks Bartimaeus what he wants him to do. That's curious, isn't it? Why doesn't Jesus just cure him of his blindness? Many of us, like Bartimaeus, are in need of the Lord's help, but when Jesus comes by, instead of asking him to heal our blindness, we ask him for a few dollars. For some reason, God requires that we name exactly what we need from him. The self-examination, confession, and prayer that precede Step 7 should prepare us well for this.

Be confident that God will respond to you

1 John 5:14-15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

2 Corinthians 3:4-5

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God

Re-making us is what God does

Isaiah 64:8

O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (See the Big Book, p. 25, "central fact," and p. 85, "flow ...")

2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is

freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

The concept of positive substitution, sometimes called the Law of Substitution, is well known. It comes from the Bible (e.g.: Ezek 36:26; Ps 51:10), though few acknowledge that, or practice it in the way the Bible shows. The worldly life-coaches teach you to substitute positive thoughts for negative ones. For someone who is not practicing a spiritual way of life, that's pretty good advice. The Big Book gets it right for us, "... we ask God to direct our thinking ... we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision." Ask God to replace your ideas on how to exercise your instincts with His ideas. This will help you become willing to let go of your old, distorted ways of satisfying your instincts. It is always easier to let go of one thing when we reach for something else.

A final note: The 12 & 12 (p. 76) says that self-centered fear is the chief activator of our defects of character. With that in mind, consider 1 John 4:18, "Perfect love casteth out fear." However persistent these defects may seem, we may have every confidence that they will be removed as we continue through the steps, enjoying an ever closer relationship with God. Our ongoing conscious contact with Him Who is all love will deactivate any and all of our defects of character in due time.

Seventh Step prayer, Big Book, p. 76

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.

The Classic "Seventh Step" prayer in the Bible

Psalm 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ...

STEP EIGHT

"We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all."

Jesus once said, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" We certainly never can get into right relations with God while we are in the wrong relations with

somebody else.

In a human tangle and conflict, there are usually two sides. Some people see only their side. Some are ready to admit wrong in themselves as well as in their opponent. But the world is full of people waiting for somebody else to come and make an apology to them. They say they will not make up until they do. But what about making apology yourself first? How about telling the other person, not where he is wrong, but where you have been wrong?

When I first tried to face the issues of Christian conversion in my own life, there was someone right in my family against whom I held a deep resentment. When I began to face God honestly, I knew I had to get right with this other person. The whole relationship stood up before me and I could not avoid it. But, I said to God, "He is nine-tenths responsible for the situation." And do you know what I think God said back to me? He said, "What are you going to do about the one-tenth for which you are responsible?"

Deeply imbedded in my first total Christian decision was the necessity to make amends to someone who had done some things toward me that were wrong, but to whom I needed to confess my own bitterness and lack of love. Is it so with you? — Sam Shoemaker

Reconciling

Matthew 5:23, 24

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.

Luke 15:18

I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

Forgiving and being forgiven

Forgiving others first (see the essay on Step 8 in the 12 & 12) is necessary for those who are about to ask forgiveness for themselves. Forgiveness is the path of freedom and union with Christ, the greatest forgiver who ever lived. We need to put away resentments and bitterness—forgiveness is the golden key.

Some people say, "The first person I need to forgive is myself." The concept of forgiving oneself is found nowhere in the Big Book or the 12 & 12 and it is certainly not found in Scripture. (Better to say, "I must stop judging myself." God alone is judge. Don't judge yourself and you won't feel the need to forgive yourself.) What *is* pointed out in the 12 & 12 and the Bible is that we find personal forgiveness **as we forgive others.**

Matthew 6:14-15

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Luke 11:2-4

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say:

*'Father, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.*

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation.' "

Matthew 7:4-5

How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

St. Francis Prayer (12 & 12, page 99)

For it is by forgiving that we are forgiven.

The example of Jesus

Luke 23:34

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The call to be reconciled among ourselves

Ephesians 4:31

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of

God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body ...

The essay on Step 8 in the 12 & 12 includes the following:

While the purpose of making restitution to others is paramount, it is equally necessary that we extricate from an examination of our personal relations every bit of information about ourselves and our fundamental difficulties that we can. Since defective relations with other human beings have nearly always been the immediate cause of our woes, including our alcoholism, no field of investigation could yield more satisfying and valuable rewards than this one. Calm, thoughtful reflection upon personal relations can deepen our insight. We can go far beyond those things which were superficially wrong with us, to see those flaws which were basic, flaws which sometimes were responsible for the whole pattern of our lives. Thoroughness, we have found, will pay—and pay handsomely.

A terrific resource for doing this kind of inventory is the [One-Way Relationships Workbook](#) by Alfred H. Eills. The book was written for codependents, but recovering addicts and chronic sinners of all stripes find that the material applies to them as well. It has been an important part of recovery for many of us. Old wounds have been healed and the gift of forgiveness has finally come into our hearts for the people we had found it hardest to forgive. A lot of our sinful behaviors come from wounds. Heal the wound, bury the sin.

A heads-up for men about the book: it was written with a noticeable bias for a female readership. If you can read past that and the cute drawings and just get on with the work, you'll get a lot out of it. Check our resources for "An Introduction to the [One-Way Relationships Workbook](#) for People Doing the Twelve Steps."

STEP NINE

"We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

One of the first things I had to do after my initial surrender was to write a letter of restitution. There was a kind of warm glow about getting ready to do that; but when I came to the doing of it, it was just plain hard work. Yet it had to be done.

We have no right in squaring ourselves with another to confess the sins of a third party or bring him into it. In rare cases, to confess in all honesty will hurt the person to whom we confess, and we should not do it. But

this must not be taken as an excuse for not doing it when we know perfectly well he deserves to know, and we cannot right the relationship until we tell him.

Pray about it. Pray for the right time and the right spirit. Pray for him to receive it in the right spirit, so that it provides an occasion for spiritual advance for you both. Be honest with the family, or with the company about padding the expense account. Apologize to that person with whom you lost your temper. Sometimes people are dead before we see the need to make restitution to them. Put it in God's hands. Ask Him if possible to make known to them our sorrow, and leave the matter there.

— Sam Shoemaker

Restitution

Luke 19:8-10

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Romans 13:7-10

Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Before you take an action, seek wise counsel

Proverbs 12:15

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.

Humble admission

Luke 15:20-21

So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Reconciliation

Genesis 33:3-4

Jacob himself went on ahead and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother. But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept.

Seven A's of reconciliation (from *Peacemaker Ministries*)

What do you say, what do you do when you meet someone you want to make amends to? Here is a simple protocol that is thorough and to the point. Many of us have found it helpful.

1. Address everyone involved (All those whom you affected)
2. Avoid *if, but, and maybe* (Do not try to excuse your wrongs)
3. Admit specifically (Both attitudes and actions)
4. Acknowledge the hurt (Express sorrow for hurting someone)
5. Accept the consequences (Such as making restitution)
6. Alter your behavior (Change your attitudes and actions)
7. Ask for forgiveness

A true and great example of "altered behavior": There was an alcoholic who habitually blew his paycheck in bars. When he got sober and came to this step, he asked his wife to open her own checking account and had his employer direct deposit his paycheck to that account.

STEP TEN

"We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

Even the greatest of all Christian conversions is just a beginning; it must be continued and renewed all the time. The grit of sin gets into our machinery and stops it. Sometimes we even get all the way back into the old ways of self-will and various kinds of sin. So the inventory must go on. Sometimes clear victory comes that is relatively permanent. Sometimes we are fighting thirty years afterward the same old sins as we fought in the beginning.

Daily confession to God, periodical confession to others, for our own clearing or to keep the record straight, are needed and will always be needed. Alcoholics always say, "I am an alcoholic," not "I was an alcoholic."

Christians must learn to believe and to say, "I am a sinner"—not "I was a sinner," but "I am a sinner." If we really feel that, we will avoid the pride of grace which makes some people think that because they have been Christians a long time they do not sin. And we will much more easily admit our wrongs to others when they arise. — Sam Shoemaker

Instructions for Step Ten from the Big Book, p. 84

Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.

The basic principles we discovered and exercised in the 4th and 5th Steps are the same ones that will apply to this step as well.

Confess

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Self-examination

Romans 12:3

Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith GOD has given you.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Put yourselves to the test to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!

Thorough

Psalms 77:6

I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.

Intention: repentance

Psalms 119:59

I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

Lamentations 3:40

Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

Fearless

Psalm 4:4

Stand in awe, and sin not:

*commune with your own heart upon your bed,
and be still.*

Unconfessed sins take their toll on us

Psalm 32:3-4

When I kept silent,

my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

For day and night

your hand was heavy upon me;

my strength was sapped

as in the heat of summer.

Benefits of confession

Proverbs 28:13

He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

Psalm 32:1-2

*How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered!*

*How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

Our side of the street

Matthew 7:4-5

*How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,'
when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first
take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to
remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

1 John 1:8-9

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in
us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our
sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Reconciliation

Psalm 133:1

*How good and pleasant it is
when brothers live together in unity!*

STEP ELEVEN

"We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

Religion is relationship with God, and we must give something to it if we would deepen and enrich a relationship. Prayer, Bible study, and participation in Christian worship are the three classical ways of keeping in touch with God. It is astonishing when you think of it, that we finite, sinful human beings can come into contact with Almighty God. But we can through the introduction Jesus Christ has given us to Him.

Time was when prayer was unreal to me, and the Bible dull; but then came the experience of finding Christ with power, and both things began to be real. When I got them into focus, as means by which one could grow in a life that by then I really wanted to live, they came alive.

We must set apart time each day for this, first thing in the morning. Half an hour is not too much. Then renew it every time you can remember by brief prayers to God through the day. And don't forget: God sometimes sends His own direct word to us for our encouragement and guidance.

— Sam Shoemaker

The Big Book introduces Step Eleven as follows on p. 85

It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. 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 on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. 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.

Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, 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.

Prayer

Ephesians 6:18

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

Philippians 4:6

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

1 Timothy 2:1-4

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, [and] giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this [is] good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The following is an extensive exploration of the classic breakdown of types of prayer. It's meant to inform and to inspire you, not to overwhelm you. So, take what you can use, leave the rest behind.

A.C.T.S. of prayer

Primary types of prayer found in the Bible:

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication

Adoration and praise

Adoration/praise acknowledges God for who He is and for His attributes. Praising God is a great mood elevator. King David's prayer is one of many scriptural examples of a prayer of praise and adoration to God:

I Chronicles 29:10-13

Praise be to You, O Lord,

God of our father Israel,

from everlasting to everlasting.

Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power

and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,

for everything in heaven and earth is Yours.

Yours, O Lord, is the kingdom,

You are exalted as head over all.

Wealth and honor come from You;

You are the ruler of all things.

In Your hands are strength and power

to exalt and give strength to all.

*Now, our God, we give You thanks,
and praise Your glorious name.*

Confession

Penitential or confessing prayer is essential for conscious contact with God: You cannot enter the presence of God in prayer without confessing: Is 6:1-5. God won't answer our prayers when there is sin in our lives: Ps 66:18; Is 59:1; Pr 28:9, 13.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

One of the greatest examples of confessional prayer is Psalm 51.

Psalm 51:1-4 (the entire psalm has 19 verses)

*Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
Wash me through and through from my wickedness
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.
Against you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight.*

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is the foundation of our life in faith.

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God ...

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

... pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Thanksgiving is our grateful acknowledgment of and our response to God's grace. The epicenter of our faith in community is the Eucharist (also known as Holy Communion and the Lord's Supper), which comes from the Greek *eucharisteo*, to give thanks. At the center of that word is the Greek for grace, *charis*. At the center of our thanks is God's grace. One might say that the great spiritual awakening we seek through the 12 Steps is coming to awareness of who God is and who we are in relationship to Him. In that, we discover His amazing grace, His awesome power, and His eternal love—and we respond with

thanksgiving—not only in our words but in how we live our very lives. What we bring to the Eucharist table is ourselves. We offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving to this God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thanksgiving is for what God does. It typically includes praise.

For what God “has” done

He has given us life itself (Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:29; Hebrews 12:9). He has provided sustenance (Matthew 5:45); food, water, clothing (Matthew 6:25-26); air to breathe (Acts 17:25; cf. Genesis 2:7); a glorious place in which to reside (Acts 17:26).

He has given us spiritual life (John 10:10; 2 Peter 1:3). This life was given to us through the precious sacrifice of His Son (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

For what He “is” doing

We thank God for His ongoing provision for our lives (Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 3:12).

For what He “will” do

Jesus Christ will return for us (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11), and he has promised to give us eternal life (Matthew 25:21,46). We are thankful for His promises (Matthew 28:20; 2 Timothy 4:16-17; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 13:5-6; 2 Peter 3:9). The Christian is thankful for the “future” blessings that will come from God.

Supplication

The word *supplication* has its origins in a word that refers to bending down and indicates bowing or kneeling in submission. Accordingly, to supplicate is to ask humbly and earnestly. Supplication refers especially to the character of our prayer, primarily in ***petitions and intercessions***.

1 Kings 8:34

And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven.

Petitions for a personal request

God wants us to petition Him. It pleases Him. If all we knew was the “Our Father” that Jesus recommended, we would know that it is God’s pleasure that we come to Him with petitions. Not surprisingly, people have come up with all kinds of rules about what is and isn’t appropriate to petition God for when we pray. But what rules does Scripture provide? It’s clear in James 4:3 that selfish motives won’t get you anywhere.

That's what you see reflected in the Big Book's advice on page 87. Early AAs were devoted to the Book of James. On the other hand, God seems to have a capacity to hear all kinds of requests, including maledictions (*Strike all my enemies on the jaw; break the teeth of the wicked.* Ps 3:7) and even self-serving requests. Did not Jesus himself ask the Father to "let this cup pass from me"? In his humanity, Jesus sought to avoid the terrible suffering—which he knew was his God-ordained purpose—that awaited him. Is that selfish? Well, Jesus is not selfish, but he is human (as well as divine), and he shows us how to be human. Yes, he asks of the Father, but in the very next phrase he says, "yet not my will, but Thine be done." That is how he closes out this prayer. Therein is an example for us all, an example that we see among the Old Testament psalmists as well.

The lesson learned: Be free in your prayers. Be as free with God as a child is free in making requests of his father. Ask anything of Him that your heart desires. Don't judge it—but do as Jesus and the psalmists do—release them to Him to dispose of your requests as He will—knowing that He knows far better than we do what is in our best interests and what will fit best with His plans. In this way, ***prayer becomes a way to turn over to God the desires that occupy our hearts and minds***, rather than simply to submit an edited list of requisitions we want to see processed. We all have many things that we secretly yearn for. Might as well be honest about them, and get them out of our heads and into God's hands. Just remember what Jesus said in closing and you won't go wrong. "... yet not my will, but Thine be done."

The Serenity Prayer is a good example of a petition. Here is the complete, unabridged, original version by Reinhold Niebuhr:

*God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.*

*Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,*

*So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.*

Amen.

Intercessions for others:

Christ intercedes for us: *Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25; 9:24; 1 Tim 2:5-6*

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us as we pray: *Rom 8:26-27;
Jude 20; Eph 6:18*

We should intercede for others: *Jas 5:16; Acts 8:24; 2 Ti 2:1*

Other types of prayer

A.C.T.S. is a good formula for the primary ways to pray as shown in the Bible. There are other prayers that don't quite fit the formula, or perhaps they are a subset of one of the categories. Here are some of them.

Practicing humble submission (Matthew 6:9,10—*Thy will be done*)

Some people use the Third Step prayer (Big Book, page 63) daily. The

St. Francis Prayer (12 & 12, page 99) makes a strong link between surrender and taking action. Surrender to God's will sounds passive, but it actually energizes our life's mission and leads us to greater initiatives than we would ever have undertaken without that surrender.

Complain to God about God (Jeremiah 20—*O LORD, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed*)

Express doubts, anger, fear (Psalm 13:1—*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?*)

Blessing (Psalm 103:1—*Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.*)

One of the great psalms—103:1-13 is a wonderful way to start the day.

Affirmation (Psalm 23—*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*)

Advice on praying

Matthew 6:7

When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered only by repeating their words again and again.

John 15:7

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want, and it will be done for you.

James 1:5-6

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

Romans 8:26-27

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

Mark 11:24-25

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.

Assurance that God hears and answers prayer

1 John 5:14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

Luke 11:9

So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Psalms 91:15

*He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.*

Successful prayer requires:

A humble heart

2 Chronicles 7:14

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Wholeheartedness

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Obedience

1 John 3:22

And we will receive whatever we request because we obey him and do the things that please him.

“Whatever” does not apply unless you are praying in accordance with God’s will and in obedience to His commandments. See John 15:7 cited above in **Advice on praying**.

Faith

1 John 5:14-15

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.

Righteousness

Psalms 34:17

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.*

The righteous are those who live according to God’s will—which sounds a lot like people who “practice these principles” in all their affairs.

Love of God

Psalms 91:14-16

*“Because he loves me,” says the LORD,
“I will rescue him; I will protect him,
for he acknowledges my name.*

*He will call upon me,
and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.*

*With long life will I satisfy him
and show him my salvation.”*

The word “love” signifies a deep longing or desire for the Lord, specifically, longing for His redemption in one’s life.

When are prayers not pleasing to God?

Long-term, chronic rejection of God can bring judgment

Proverbs 1:23-28

“If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you. Since you rejected me when I called and no one gave heed when I stretched out my hand, since you ignored all my advice and would not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh at your disaster; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—when

calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me."

Disobedience

Deuteronomy 1:45

You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you.

1 Samuel 14:37

So Saul asked God, "Shall I go down after the Philistines? Will you give them into Israel's hand?" But God did not answer him that day.

Holding on to sin

Psalms 66:18

*If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;*

Neglect of mercy

Proverbs 21:13

*If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor,
he too will cry out and not be answered.*

Despising the law

Proverbs 28:9

If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable

Evil deeds unrepented

Micah 3:4

Then they will cry out to the LORD, but he will not answer them. At that time he will hide his face from them because of the evil they have done.

Isaiah 1:15

When you spread out your hands in prayer,

I will hide my eyes from you;

even if you offer many prayers,

I will not listen.

Your hands are full of blood;

Instability or doubt

James 1:6-8

But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

Not heeding God's call

Zechariah 7:13

"When I called, they did not listen; so when they called, I would not listen," says the LORD Almighty."

Selfish motives

James 4:3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Meditation

Joshua 1:8

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Psalms 48:9

Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Psalms 143:5

*I remember the days of long ago;
I meditate on all your works
and consider what your hands have done.*

Psalms 63:6

*On my bed I remember you
I think of you through the watches of the night.*

The meditation encouraged in the Bible is similar yet different from the concept of meditation common in Eastern religions. The first step is the same—an emptying of self-centered thoughts, fears, etc. But whereas the Buddhist ideal is to be free of all desire, the Judeo-Christian ideal is to be free of all desire except for the Lord. He is to be the object of all desire, body and soul. Time and again in Scripture is this concept of thirsting for God, hungering for Him, feeling the pain of His absence. Christ offers himself to fulfill those desires. He is the living water, the bread of heaven. In him “all my longings are fulfilled” (Ps 63:5). He will never abandon us; he will be with us and love us faithfully.

As you can see from the Scripture excerpts above, we meditate on what God has done—globally and historically, as well as in our personal lives. We meditate on His attributes, like His love, His steadfastness, that He is just, merciful, ever-present, etc. Can you see how beneficial this practice could be? Psalm 63 opens us to constantly meditating upon God, all the time—which is what Jesus did. He was always attuned to the Father,

seeking and doing His will.

But most of all, we meditate on the word of God. One of the most enduring practices in this regard is known as *Lectio Divina*. It has been likened to "Feasting on the Word." The four parts are: first taking a bite (*Lectio*), then chewing on it (*Meditatio*). Next is the opportunity to savor the essence of it (*Oratio*). Finally, the Word is digested and made a part of the body (*Contemplatio*). You can do it all or you can do one part of it, two parts of it, ... Just practicing the *lectio* with the *meditatio* works well for most people and is especially recommended for the beginner.

Lectio

This first moment consists in reading the scriptural passage slowly, attentively several times. Many write down words in the Scripture that stick out to them or grasp their attention during this moment.

Meditatio

The Christian, gravitating around the passage or one of its words, takes it and ruminates on it, thinking in God's presence about the text. He or she benefits from the Holy Spirit's ministry of illumination, i.e. the work of the Holy Spirit that imparts spiritual understanding of the sacred text. It is not a special revelation from God, but the inward working of the Holy Spirit, which enables the Christian to grasp the revelation contained in the Scripture.

Oratio

This is prayer: prayer understood both as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with the One who has invited us into His embrace; and as consecration, prayer as the priestly offering to God of parts of ourselves that we have not previously believed God wants. In this consecration-prayer we allow the word that we have taken in and on which we are pondering to touch and change our deepest selves. God also invites us in *lectio divina* to hold up our most difficult and pain-filled experiences to Him, and to gently recite over them the healing word or phrase He has given us in our *lectio* and *meditatio*. In this *oratio*, this consecration-prayer, we allow our real selves to be touched and changed by the word of God.

Contemplatio

This moment is characterized by a simple, loving focus on God. In other words, it is a beautiful, wordless contemplation of God, a joyful rest in His presence.

The example of Jesus praying

Jesus instructs his disciples to pray alone (Matt 6:6), but he also instructs them on how to pray communally (the “Our Father”, Matt 6:9-13).

Jesus prays with others and for others (see his prayers in John’s account of the Last Supper). Compare how he prays: at Gethsemane, at other times how he gives thanks to the Father, how he prays to the Father from the cross. Great lessons here—just go through the gospels and study all the different times Jesus himself prays and has quiet time. (Matt 26:39, 27:46; Mk 1:35, 14:22; Lk 5:16, 10:21, 22:42, 44; Jn 17:11, 20-21)

Prayers in the Big Book

Prayer before taking the steps on Page 59:

“We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.”

The Third Step prayer on page 63:

“God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always.”

The Fourth Step prayer dealing with Resentments on page 67:

“We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, ‘This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.’”

The Fourth Step prayer dealing with fear on page 68:

“We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

The Fourth Step prayer dealing with Sexual Ideals on page 69:

“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them. We remembered always that our sex powers were God-given and therefore good, neither to be used lightly or selfishly nor to be despised and loathed.”

The Fourth Step sexual amends prayer on page 69:

“In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.”

The Fourth Step general prayer for Sexual Sanity on page 70:

“To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing.”

The post-Fifth Step prayer of Gratitude and Assurance on page 75:

“Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better.’

The Sixth Step prayer of willingness on page 76:

“If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.”

The Seventh Step prayer on page 76:

“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.”

The Ninth Step prayer of willingness on page 76:

“Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes.”

The Ninth Step prayer for strength and direction on page 79:

“Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be.”

The Ninth Step prayer of dealing with jealousy on page 82:

“Each might pray about it, having the other one’s happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy”

The Ninth Step prayer for the demonstration of a spiritual life with family members on page 83:

“... we clean house with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.”

The Tenth Step prayers: pages 84 and 85

“Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them.”

“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.”

The Eleventh Step: night meditation and prayer, page 87

“When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? 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.”

Morning meditation and prayer, page 87

“On awakening 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.

“In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision.

“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.”

The efficiency prayer on the bottom of page 87:

“As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day ‘Thy will be done.’ 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.”

The Twelfth Step final prayer on page 164:

“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.”

STEP TWELVE

“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics [others who share our common problem], and practice these principles in all our affairs.”

So often you hear AAs speak about being out on "twelfth-step work." That means getting what they have found across to others. They take no money for it, but they will go any hour of the day or night to people who honestly want to learn "the program." The reason these men and women keep going is partly that their friends in AA are willing and ready to give them time, encouragement, challenge. Every member of AA is a carrier of AA. In none of these twelve steps do the rest of us need to learn from them more than in this one. A Christian who is not enthusiastic about Christ, who does not love to speak about Him and relate His power to the needs of others, is hardly a Christian at all.

In AA everybody is a one-man awakening, wherever he can touch another alcoholic. Let us promise God that we will let Him use us in this way. And let us follow these twelve steps faithfully, that through them we may become effective people for Christ in His world.

Christ told us we were to be His witnesses. The early Church burned like a fire, and spread rapidly, because of the contagion of its people. They had found a risen Christ, and they were excited about Him. They couldn't keep quiet. They witnessed by what they were, what they did, and what they said. People saw a change in them because of Christ—a change for the better—and they wanted this faith and new life. The early Christians had somehow learned how to get their faith over to others. They met a pagan world, they met daily life, they met martyrdom, with a radiant faith. They were different from any other people on earth.

If what you love is horse racing, or clothes, or the stock market, or your grandchildren, that is what you'll talk about. If what you love is Christ, you will find ways to talk about Him to other people. You can't make half-dead church members enthusiastic witnesses, and you can't keep people who have begun to know Christ from beginning to live for Him and talk about Him. So does the great contagion grow and spread.

— Sam Shoemaker

Spiritual awakening—personality change

Romans 6:4

Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Galatians 2:20

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

The idea that carrying the message naturally follows the spiritual awakening is taken right from one of Paul's epistles. Having been transformed by Christ's work, we proclaim that good news to others. The passion to do this work is a sign that the awakening has taken place.

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.

Carry the message: experience, strength and hope

Too often Christians share what they believe and why they believe, rather than providing a witness of what God through Jesus Christ has done in their lives. AAs are great at sharing the renewing work of God in their lives. Where they are often poor is in not crediting Him, not giving God the glory. Instead, they give the Steps the glory or the fellowship the glory. They worship the creature instead of the Creator, which is a grave sin (Romans 1:25). They ignore the very prayer they so often repeat: **"Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life"** (excerpt from the 3rd Step Prayer). Jesus himself put great store in the value of his works as a witness to who he is (John 5:33, 14:11) and as a way to draw people into relationship with him (Mark 10:46-52). Telling how God's power changed us is the most effective evangelism there is, **so long as it glorifies God's name and draws people to Him.**

Acts 5:20

"Go, stand in the temple courts," he [an angel of the Lord] said, "and tell

the people the full message of this new life.”

Psalm 66:16

Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Luke 7:22-23

[Jesus:] “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”

1 Corinthians 3:4-5

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Don't worry about what to say—God will take care of that.

Jeremiah 1:6-9

"Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a child.' You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you," declares the LORD. Then the LORD reached out his hand and touched my mouth and said to me, "Now, I have put my words in your mouth."

1 Peter 3:15

Quietly trust yourself to Christ your Lord and if anybody asks why you believe as you do, be ready to tell him, and do it in a gentle and respectful way.

Practice these principles in all our affairs

Matthew 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount); Ephesians 4-6; 1 Corinthians 13; Book of James

One day at a time

Luke 9:23

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

Matthew 6:31-34

"So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about

itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."

Progress not perfection

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

God will constantly disclose more to you and to us

John 16:12-13

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come."

Endnotes

The Oxford Group was a Christian revival movement started by Dr. Frank Buchman, an American Lutheran pastor, in the early 20th century. The focus was on personal conversion rather than the reformation of society as a whole. The basic philosophy: all people are sinners, all sinners can be changed, confession is a prerequisite to change, the change can access God directly, miracles are again possible, the change must change others. Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, who founded AA, were Oxford Group members. According to Wilson, "The early AA got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done and working with others straight from the Oxford Group and from nowhere else." AA also incorporated its famous "God as you understand Him" from the Oxford Group, whose various members used phrases like: "Try to bring a person to a decision to surrender as much of himself as he knows to as much of God as he knows." (Dick B., *Anne Smith's Journal*, 3rd ed, pp. 25, 97) "So he said that he would surrender as much of himself as he could, to as much of Christ as he understood." (Shoemaker, *Children of the Second Birth*, p. 25) Though effective for a time, Buchman and his organization, which he renamed the Moral Re-Armament (MRA), fell to the temptations of money and politics, wandered from their Christ-centered beginnings, evolved into a cult, and eventually became an object of scorn and ridicule.

The Rev. Sam Shoemaker was an evangelical Episcopal priest, Rector of Calvary Church in Manhattan, and, for a time, the North American head of the Oxford Group (he broke with Buchman in 1941). Bill Wilson referred to Sam Shoemaker as a co-founder of AA and gave him a great

deal of credit (rightly) for the AA program. "It was from Sam Shoemaker, that we absorbed most of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, steps that express the heart of AA's way of life. Dr. Silkworth gave us the needed knowledge of our illness, but Sam Shoemaker had given us the concrete knowledge of what we could do about it, he passed on the spiritual keys by which we were liberated."

Peacemaker Ministries, visit www.peacemaker.net

Works cited:

Alcoholics Anonymous (the Big Book)

12 Steps and 12 Traditions (the 12 & 12)

One-Way Relationships Workbook by Alfred Ells

"Twelve Steps to Power," (the opening commentaries for each step in our guide are excerpts from this pamphlet), "What the Church has to Learn from Alcoholics Anonymous," and "Groups That Work: A 'Christian Program'" by the Rev. Sam Shoemaker