

Session #1 – Overview, Steps 1, 2, & 3 (Day 1)

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. [*Both leaders introduce themselves*] Before we begin, let's have a moment of silence to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience... followed by the "Serenity Prayer"...

WELCOME to the _____ "Back to Basics" Beginners' Classes. During the next 2 days, you will learn how to recover from alcoholism by taking the Twelve Steps as outlined in the book "Alcoholics Anonymous". The Program of AA is a spiritually based plan of action that will remove the compulsion to drink and enable you to live a life that is happy, useful, and whole.

AA instructional meetings date back to the early 1940's. After the publication of the seven Cleveland Plain Dealer articles in October and November 1939 and the March 1941 "Saturday Evening Post" article about Alcoholics Anonymous, AA started growing so rapidly it became impossible for the early members to individually take new prospects through the Steps. This was especially true in Cleveland where Clarence Snyder, the 40th sober member of AA, and the other Cleveland AA's had the highest success rate with sobering up drunks. So they began to take people through the Steps in a class-like environment. Beginners' Classes (as they are sometimes called) were held for the purpose of acquainting both the old and new members with the 12 steps upon which our program is based. So that all twelve steps could be covered in a minimum amount of time, they were divided into four classifications, and one meeting each week was devoted to each of the four subdivisions. One of the most well-known "Twelve-Step Beginners' Classes" originated in the Minneapolis, Minnesota Nicollet Group, which was founded in 1943 by Ed Webster, author of the book "Stools and Bottles", and Barry Collins. Members of this group published the original "Little Red Book" which is a compilation of notes used to teach the Nicollet group's Beginners' Meeting.

Each group developed its own guidelines for teaching the "Beginners' Classes." However, all these groups had something in common. They provided a safe, structured environment in which newcomers (and older

members) learned the principles of AA, took and re-took the Twelve Steps, and had life-changing spiritual experiences.

During November 1995 Wally P., an AA member and archivist, after having done nearly two years of research about the early AA Beginners' Meetings, led the Copper Valley Group in San Manuel, Arizona, through the Twelve Steps as part of their regularly scheduled AA meeting for four successive Friday nights. This was the spark that was to flare the Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Meetings from the 1940s and 50s back into existence. Now, about five-and-a-half years later there are over 1,000 groups and meetings teaching the Steps in 4 one-hour to one-and-a-half-hour formats similar to the way our early pioneers did in the 40s and 50s. These meetings grew in popularity so fast in the 1990s mainly because of the publication of Wally's book in 1997 entitled "Back to Basics: The Alcoholics Anonymous Beginners' Meetings -- Here are the Steps we took... in Four One-Hour Sessions!" We encourage each of you who are interested in teaching these classes the way our founders did to purchase a copy of Wally's book. You can order it from his web site www.aabacktobasics.com. There is also a group in Texas who makes their format available online for free. Visit **B2BnTexas** on **AOL** for their format and a copy of this weekend's format is also available on the World Wide Web for free at back.to/aabasics. See us after this session or anytime during the weekend and we can give you these web site addresses again.

In the past year, groups teaching the Beginners' Meetings have started in Hong Kong, Thailand, Sweden and Israel. Wally's book is in the process of being translated into Chinese, Swedish and Spanish. We have regular email correspondence with members of a group that just started teaching the classes within the past month in Vancouver British Columbia.

Some of you may be thinking that the approach of taking the 12 Steps in four weeks, much less in two days, drastically goes against what we hear in many of our AA meetings today [give examples of "just don't drink and go to meetings", "take it slow and easy", "wait until you feel better before you do a 4th Step", and the greatest myth of them all: "work a-step-a-year"]. Well, we're going to point out some examples to you in the Big Book which go drastically contrary to the message we often hear today. The Steps were taken quickly in the early days of AA. There was

no “wait until you feel better” before you worked the steps. Our co-founders would have died drunk if that were the case.

Page 13 of “Bill’s Story” describes how Bill W., our New York co-founder, took the steps while he was still in Towns Hospital where he was separated from alcohol for the last time. Bill writes on page 13, paragraph two:

“There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then I understood Him, to do with me as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. [**That’s our Third Step, isn’t it!?**] I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. [**That sounds like Steps 4, 5, 6, & 7, right!?**] I have not had a drink since.

My schoolmate visited me, and I fully acquainted him with my problems and deficiencies. We made a list of people I had hurt or toward whom I felt resentment. [**Step 4**] I expressed my entire willingness to approach these individuals, admitting my wrong. [**Step 8**] Never was I to be critical of them. I was to right all such matters to the utmost of my ability.

I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense. I was to sit quietly when in doubt, asking only for direction and strength to meet my problems as He would have me. Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my usefulness to others. Then only might I expect to receive. But that would be in great measure. [**Sounds a lot like Steps 10 & 11, doesn’t it?**]

My friend [**Ebby T.**] promised when these things were done I would enter upon a new relationship with my Creator; that I would have the elements of a way of living which answered all my problems. Belief in the power of God, plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements. Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I

must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all.”

Then Bill had his white flash spiritual experience and never drank again. Bill and Ebby worked the equivalent of our Twelve Steps while Bill was still in the hospital. How many of us do this today?

On page 157, Bill D., soon to be “AA #3”, entered the Akron City Hospital for the eighth time in six months. Two days later Bill W. and Dr. Bob, our Akron, Ohio co-founder, visited Bill D. for an hour and talked to him about Step 1. On page 158 the next day he took Step 2. Then in the second paragraph of page 158 it says:

“On the third day the lawyer gave his life to the care and direction of his Creator, and said he was perfectly willing to do anything necessary.” [**He took Step 3 – “Made a decision to turn his will and his life over to the care of God as he understood him.”**]

On page 190 Bill D. describes his surrender in more detail. Three lines down:

“...I remember when the boys came back, that I told them, ‘I have gone to this Higher Power and have told Him that I am willing to put His world first, above everything. I have already done it, and I am willing to do it again here in the presence of you or I am willing to say it any place, anywhere in the world from now on and not be ashamed of it.’”

Half-way through the next paragraph of that page Bill D. says he took the equivalent of Steps 4 and 5 his third day in the hospital:

“Of course we talked over quite a number of failings that I had and made a sort of an inventory, which wasn’t too difficult...”

Then three lines down the founders said to him:

“There is one other thing. You should go out and take this program to somebody else that needs it and wants it.”

Bill D. was three days sober. He did as far as we can tell at least the first five steps. And he was instructed to Twelve-Step another drunk when he got out of the hospital. Is that the message we're passing on today?

On page 292, Earl T., founder of AA in Chicago, describes Dr. Bob taking him through what was at that time the 6 Steps in **three or four hours**:

“The day before I was due to go back to Chicago, a Wednesday and Dr. Bob's afternoon off, he had me down to the office and we spent three or four hours formally going through the Six-Step program as it was at that time. The six steps were:

1. Complete deflation [**Step 1**]
2. Dependence and guidance from a High Power [**Steps 3 & 11**]
3. Moral inventory [**Step 4**]
4. Confession [**Step 5**]
5. Restitution [**Steps 8 & 9**]
6. Continued work with other alcoholics. [**Step 12**]

Dr. Bob led me through all of these steps. At the moral inventory, he brought up some of my bad personality traits or character defects, such as selfishness, conceit, jealousy, carelessness, intolerance, ill-temper, sarcasm, and resentment. We went over these at great length and then he finally asked me if I wanted these defects of character removed [**Step 6**]. When I said yes, we both knelt at his desk and prayer, each of us asking to have these defects taken away [**Step 7**].

This picture is still vivid. If I live to be a hundred, it will always stand out in my mind. It was very impressive and I wish that every AA could have the benefit of this type of sponsorship today. Dr. Bob always emphasized the religious angle very strongly, and I think it helped. I know it helped me. Dr. Bob then led me through the restitution step, in which I made a list of all of the persons I had harmed [**Step 8**], and worked out ways and means of slowly making restitution.”

Page 302 describes how Dr. Bob outlined the program to Clarence Snyder, AA founder in Cleveland. Page 302, paragraph 4:

“After being in the hospital for several days, a plan of living was outlined to me. A very simple plan that I still find much joy and happiness in following. It is impossible to put on paper all the benefits I have derived... physical, mental, domestic, spiritual, and monetary. This is no idle talk. It is the truth.”

Hopefully we've dispelled the myth that the way we quit drinking and live happy and contented lives is by attending meetings only and catching recovery by osmosis. For those who need and want to recover from alcoholism let's begin the AA Beginners' Classes. And for anyone who's been in AA for a while and would like a new experience with the 12 Steps this weekend, you can go through this process as a “refresher” class to renew your spiritual awakening and relationship with the God of your understanding. Keep in mind as we go through the steps this weekend that between 1939 and 1955 Alcoholics Anonymous had a 75% recovery rate. Some groups, particularly in Cleveland, Ohio, claimed a 93% recovery rate during that period. As we go through the weekend, let's see if we can bring the success rate of Alcoholics Anonymous, even if by just 1/1000th of a percent, closer to what our original success was.

Let's get started... Since 1939 our Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, has been and still is our textbook for recovery. We will be using it extensively during these sessions.

The Big Book was first published in April 1939. It was written by several of the first 100 people to recover from alcoholism. Since then, alcoholics have used it all over the world as a program for recovery.

So that we can complete each class within the time allotted for each session, please write down anything that you do not understand or need clarified and save it until the end of each session. Questions can be asked at that time.

The Big Book is the book we will be getting our instructions from for taking the steps. Occasionally we will refer to one of the source books used to write the Big Book or a pamphlet used by our early members. But, if you cannot reconcile something we say with the Big Book don't pay much attention to it. We'll do our best to keep our opinions out of

these discussions. We're here to pass on the AA program as written and practiced by the early members.

In order for this process to work during the next 2 days, certain guidelines will need to be followed by the people who are taking the steps and for those who are sponsoring people through the steps.

1. Because many alcoholics have difficulties reading when newly sober, the leaders who taught these sessions in the 40s read to the newcomers out of the book. We will be doing the same. If you've brought your Big Book with you please follow along as we read. Sometimes we will be going through the material rather fast. If you are unable to follow along, it's ok – just listen the best you can. Remember: we are here to take the **ACTIONS** that the Big Book prescribes, not just to study the book. If you **take** the Steps as described in the Big Book, you will recover from alcoholism.
2. It is our experience that this process works best when the sponsor and protege attend all of these sessions together. If you don't have a sponsor or your sponsor is not here with you, we have people here who can volunteer to help you this weekend.
3. It is imperative that when writing your 4th Step inventory you receive help and guidance from your sponsor and / or other members here that have been through the work. Many people try to do their 4th Step by themselves and wonder why many weeks or months later they're still not finished. It's very dangerous to go it alone in spiritual matters. That's why as part of our second session we'll be starting our inventories together. We understand that this phase of our development can get quite personal. That's why the 5th Step will of course **not** be taken with the group (obviously) but should be completed between today and tomorrow morning to the best of your ability. We also realize that within one day most of us cannot write an extensive inventory. The idea here is to get down to the causes and conditions which blocks us from the Power that keeps us safe and protected from drinking alcohol. Within the next two days we'll be able to uncover our darkest flaws. We'll ask God for their removal and commence ways of restitution for the things we did because of those flaws. If this is your first time through the steps it will not be the last. It is our experience as well as the experience of the early members that repeated working of all the steps can keep us separated from alcohol permanently and bring us closer to God.

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

4. After this weekend, sponsors should call or visit with their proteges frequently to see how he or she is doing and to offer encouragement and assistance through the remaining work – particularly with the amends and restitution process and with daily 11th Step Guidance.

Can I have a show of hands of how many people would like to take the 12 Steps with us during this weekend? [Take a count.]

Of those that raised your hand, how many do not have a sponsor? Those that do not have a sponsor please stand. It is vital that newcomers or those who are taking the steps as a refresher get a sponsor to guide them through the work. [Match up prospects with sponsors.] Once you have been matched up with a sponsor you can be seated.

Let's start this session by turning to the Forward of the Big Book which is on Roman numeral page 13 (xiii).

“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.”
(page xiii, ¶ 1, lines 1-5)

So, the Big Book tells us immediately that it's purpose is to show alcoholics how to recover from alcoholism. Until this book was written, there was no hope for alcoholics. Now, anyone who is willing to follow the directions they have provided, can recover.

During this session, we'll be reading through material in the Big Book and drawing from our own experiences to help us answer the following questions:

- 1) Am I an alcoholic?
- 2) Do I need help from a Power Greater than myself?
- 3) Am I willing to take certain actions to receive that help?

So, let's begin our journey with the first Step:

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Surrender is essential in order to recover from alcoholism. 51 pages of the Big Book are devoted to the first part of the surrender process which is to admit we have a problem. It's suggested you read through these pages to find your truth with alcohol and the illness of alcoholism. The book begins by describing the physical and mental symptoms of alcoholism. Later the book asks us to acknowledge that we are alcoholics. Before we can do this, we need to know what an alcoholic is. We'll be using information from "The Doctor's Opinion", Chapters 1, 2, and 3, and the first page of Chapter 4. Let's start on Roman numeral page 24 (xxiv), second paragraph:

"The physician who, at our request, gave us this letter, has been kind enough to enlarge upon his views in another statement which follows. In this statement he confirms what we who have suffered alcoholic torture must believe—that the body of the alcoholic is quite as abnormal as his mind. It did not satisfy us to be told that we could not control our drinking just because we were maladjusted to life, that we were in full flight from reality, or were outright mental defectives. These things were true to some extent, in fact, to a considerable extent with some of us. But we are sure that our bodies were sickened as well. In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.

The doctor's theory that we have an allergy to alcohol interests us. As laymen, our opinion as to its soundness may, of course, mean little. But as ex-problem drinkers, we can say that his explanation makes good sense. It explains many things for which we cannot otherwise account."
(page xxiv, ¶ 2 & 3)

Turn now to page xxvi where in the first paragraph Dr. Silkworth further describes the alcoholics' physical reaction to alcohol after it is ingested into the body.

"We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of alcohol on these chronic alcoholics is a manifestation of an allergy; that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate drinker. These allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all; and once having formed the habit and found they cannot break it, once having lost their

self-confidence, their reliance upon things human, their problems pile up on them and become astonishingly difficult to solve.”
(page xxvi, ¶ 1)

Notice that Dr. Silkworth referred to our physical reaction to alcohol as an “allergy” and after one drink the “phenomena of craving” develops. At the time the Big Book was written very little was known about why the alcoholic reacts to alcohol differently than other people. Since then, science and the medical community have discovered some things. We’ve learned that the body of the alcoholic is physically different. The liver and pancreas of the alcoholic process alcohol at one-third to one-tenth the rate of a non-alcoholic’s pancreas and liver. As alcohol enters the body, it breaks down into various components, one of which is acetate. We know now that acetate triggers the phenomenon of craving. In a normal drinker, the acetate moves through the system quickly and exits. But that doesn’t happen in us. In us, the acetate is not processed out, so by staying in our body, it triggers a craving for a second drink. We have a second drink, putting in us two times as much acetate, and that makes us want a drink twice as much as the normal drinker. So we have another. Then, having three times the craving as a normal drinker, we have another. You can see from that point how we have no control over how much we drink. The craving cycle has begun. Once the acetate accumulates in your body, (and that begins to happen with the FIRST drink), you will crave another – IF you’re an alcoholic. And how many times did you think it’d be nice to have JUST ONE drink to relax, but you had more? Now you see why. And this can NEVER change – IF you’re alcoholic.

Go to the 4th paragraph on the page (xxvi)... and Dr. Silkworth describes the common drinking cycle of an alcoholic and begins to describe the second factor of the alcoholic illness – we know the first factor is the abnormal reaction of the body: the physical craving. The second factor is the mental obsession. He’s going to describe the mental state of the alcohol before we pick up the first drink:

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol. The sensation is so elusive that, while they admit it is injurious, they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false. To them, their alcoholic life seems the only normal one. *They are restless, irritable and discontented*, unless they can

again experience the sense of ease and comfort which comes at once by taking a few drinks—drinks which they see others taking with impunity. After they have succumbed to the desire again, as so many do, and the phenomenon of craving develops, they pass through the well-known stages of a spree, emerging remorseful, with a firm resolution not to drink again. This is repeated over and over, and unless this person can experience an entire psychic change there is very little hope of his recovery.” (page xxvi, ¶ 4)

If our minds didn't lie to us and tell us that it's ok to drink, we would never trigger the physical allergy which produces the craving for more and more alcohol. So, we have an abnormal reaction of the body and an obsession of the mind which dooms us to drink again. It's important to note that the body of an alcoholic can *never* recover, but the mind can. If alcoholism were solely a physical disease then we could just stop drinking and that would be the solution. But the mental factor is why just quitting is not enough... That's why Dr. Silkworth says we need *an entire psychic change*.

On page xxvii, Dr. Silkworth says that all we have to do is follow a few simple rules and we won't have the desire for alcohol. We can never be cured. But, the problem won't exist for us as long as we remain in a fit spiritual condition. Those few simple rules Dr. Silkworth talks about are the actions we're going to take in the twelve steps to bring about that *entire physic change*.

In the second, third, and fourth paragraphs on page xxviii Dr. Silkworth describes five different types of alcoholics: 1) the psychopaths who are always making a resolution to quit but never make a decision followed action, 2) the alcoholic who won't admit he has a problem, 3) the one who believes he can drink safely after a long period of abstinence, 4) the manic-depressive, and of course 5) the one who seems entirely normal when sober.

We'll conclude our reading of the “Doctor's Opinion” with a summary of what he's been telling us about the physical reaction alcoholics have to alcohol:

“All these, and many others, have one symptom in common: they cannot start drinking without developing the phenomenon of craving. This phenomenon, as we have suggested, may be the

manifestation of an allergy which differentiates these people, and sets them apart as a distinct entity. It has never been, by any treatment with which we are familiar, permanently eradicated. The only relief we have to suggest is entire abstinence.”
(page xxviii, ¶ 5)

This concludes our readings from the “Doctor’s Opinion”. Due to time restraints we won’t be reading from “Bill’s Story”, with the exception of the first paragraph on page 8. If you’ve never read “Bill’s Story”, please do so on your own.

To summarize the first half of “Bill’s Story”: Bill W. is the New York stock analyst who is one of our co-founders. His story is a perfect example of an alcoholic. Some people have difficulty identifying with Bill because he was such a low-bottom, hopeless alcoholic. Here, as with the rest of the book, we ask that you look for similarities rather than differences. See where you can identify with Bill as he continues to use alcohol long after it has become a problem. It was suggested to us to try to identify with the way Bill *felt*, the way Bill *thought*, and the way Bill *drank*.

The first 8 pages of “Bill’s Story” gives an example of the alcoholic’s problem. And the last 8 pages of “Bill’s Story” describes the spiritual solution. The only thing we’re going to read from Bill’s story here is the first full paragraph on page 8 because it describes so well what we alcoholics call our *bottom*. Bill writes on page 8:

“No words can tell of the loneliness and despair I found in that bitter morass of self-pity. Quicksand stretched around me in all directions. I had met my match. I had been overwhelmed. Alcohol was my master.”
(page 8, ¶ 1)

If you have felt like that in the past, then you identify with Bill. If Bill says he’s a *real alcoholic* then you might be too.

On pages 20 & 21 of Chapter 2, “There is a Solution”, they describe three types of drinkers:

- 1) The moderate drinker [social drinker] – he has little trouble in giving up drinking entirely if he has good reason for it. He can take it or leave it alone.
- 2) The hard drinker [heavy drinker] - he may have a “habit” for drinking. It may even cause him to die a few years before his time. **BUT**, if the heavy drinker has a sufficiently strong reason - ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor [**or a DWI, threats from the boss, a nagging wife or husband, or sometimes even a short stint in a detox or rehab**] he can also stop or moderate.
- 3) The *real* alcoholic – he may start off as a social or heavy drinker. But, at some point in his drinking career he begins to lose control of his alcohol consumption once he begins to drink. The book describes the alcoholic as a real Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. It says He is seldom mildly intoxicated and always more or less insanely drunk. And they go on and on with a rough description of the *real* alcoholic.

Page 22 further describes the physical reaction alcoholics have to alcohol once ingested. Then on page 23, first paragraph, it tells us our real problem is mental rather than physical. They tell us the first drink sets us in the cycle of spree drinking. **BUT**, the real reason the spree started is because of our mental “block” in regards to **the first drink**. If our minds didn’t tell us it’s ok to take the first drink we would never end up drunk.

Page 24, paragraph 1, tells us we have no choice whether we drink or don’t drink when the book says in italicized writing:

“The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink. Our so-called will power becomes practically nonexistent. We are unable, at certain times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink.”

(page 24, ¶ 1)

Again, if it wasn’t for our minds telling us the **lie** that we can drink alcohol safely then we wouldn’t have anything to worry about when it comes to stopping drinking. As a matter of fact, if we didn’t suffer from the mental affliction of the alcoholic illness then maybe we *could* “just

not drink no matter what” or maybe we could “just don’t drink and go to meetings” [you could also add the beauty that goes something like “**even if your rear-end falls off, pick it back up, drag it to a meeting, and just don’t drink.**”, etc., etc.]

Because of the mental factor, alcoholics **can’t** get by on any of those nifty one-liners.

Page 25 tells us the **real** solution to the alcoholic problem is spiritual and we’re given two alternatives:

- 1) continue drinking to the bitter end of existence... **Or**
- 2) accept spiritual help

Is everyone clear on the physical and mental aspects of alcoholism? If not, please speak to your sponsor or one of us during the break. Also, a thorough re-reading of Chapters 2 & 3 will help you as well. Chapter 3, “More About Alcoholism”, give excellent examples of alcoholic thinking which comes before a relapse into drinking. Be sure to read over the examples of “the man of thirty”, “the jaywalker”, “our friend Jim”, and of course “Fred”. In Jim’s example they use the word “**suddenly**”. He says that suddenly the thought came into his mind that if he added milk to whisky it wouldn’t hurt him on a full stomach. Jim got that **insane** idea **suddenly** and this was after early members had already worked with him several times prior and he made a beginning on his recovery and he wasn’t even having that bad of a day. But, he only made a beginning on his recovery. He didn’t accept the entire program of action that the early members laid out for him. So in this example, the state of mind before the first drink that got Jim drunk was what we and our AA book refer to as “**suddenly**”. Let’s briefly give an example using this word **suddenly** to drive home a particular point: How many of us have heard in our meetings, “Well, if you feel like taking a drink just give me a call and I’ll talk you out of it.” That’s like me calling you up and saying, “I’m going to **suddenly** get diarrhea in 10 minutes and I want you to talk me out of it.” **That’s insane!**

The last paragraph of Chapter 3 (page 43) says:

“The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few cases, neither he nor any

other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power.”

Let’s wrap up our discussion of the physical and mental aspects of alcoholism by turning to the first page of Chapter 4, “We Agnostics” – page 44. In the first paragraph, four lines down, the Big Book gives us a statement that can be turned into a question for us to ask ourselves so we can **determine if we have the mind and the body of an alcoholic**. The book reads:

“If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely, or if when drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.”

(page 44, ¶ 1, lines 4 – 9)

We will be asking a couple questions to those of you who want to take the first step with us. This first one is to help us determine if we have the **mental and physical symptoms of alcoholism**. [Don’t have anyone stand at this time.]

[Ask both questions, one at a time.]

Could you quit drinking entirely, by yourself, even when you really wanted to?

[Motion for a response.]

Or

When you drank, did you eventually lose control over the amount you drank... even when you wanted to limited yourself to a couple [or three, or a six-pack, a case, or 10pm]? [Or you could jokingly add “or Tuesday...”]

[Again, wait for a response.]

Well, (according to the book on page 44) if that be the case, you are probably alcoholic and you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

On page 64, the Big Book says, “When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.”

So, let’s take a look at a third factor involved in the 1st Step – the spiritual malady or as the 1st Step says, “...that our lives had become unmanageable”.

Let’s turn to page 52, and look in the second paragraph for symptoms of the **spiritual malady** or as this paragraph describes them as *bedevilments*, which means to be confused. And that’s what we alcoholics suffered from all our lives – a “confused and baffled spirit”... Let’s turn these statements into questions that we can answer for ourselves. These questions can be answered in the past tense (i.e.: when we were drinking) or in the present tense (i.e.: now, not drinking, suffering from an unmanageable spirit because of untreated alcoholism). As I read them, answer these questions for yourself to see if you had been or presently may be experiencing these symptoms:

- 1) We were having trouble with personal relationships (and we include ourselves here). Does that apply?
- 2) We couldn’t control our emotional natures (ever have “up and down” days?). Does that apply?
- 3) We were a prey to (or had bouts of) misery and depression. Does that apply?
- 4) We couldn’t make a living (or a decent successful life). Does that apply?
- 5) We had a feeling of uselessness. Does that apply?
- 6) We were full of fear (ever worry about things?). Does that apply?
- 7) We were unhappy. Does that apply?
- 8) We couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people. Does that apply?

So, if several of those apply to you -- your life really is unmanageable and chances are you are suffering from a malady which only spiritual experience (or awakening) will conquer.

Back on page 44 in the second paragraph the book told us that we have only two alternatives: 1) to be doomed an alcoholic death... or 2) to live on a spiritual basis.

So, if your choice is to live on a spiritual basis, rest assured that not only is a spiritual awakening possible, it is a guarantee, provided we keep an open mind and take the Steps as described in this book.

We're going to begin this process of admittance with the 1st Step. On page 30, the Big Book tells us exactly what we have to do to make the admission that we're real alcoholics. It says, "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."

In order to smash the delusion that we're not alcoholics, we're going to ask each of you to answer a simple question, "Are you ready to concede (which means admit) to your innermost self you are powerless over alcohol?" In other words, "Are you alcoholic?" All that is required is a *yes* or *no* answer.

If you are not convinced you are an alcoholic or that your life is unmanageable, please let someone know at the break. Your "sponsor", "spiritual advisor" or one of us is willing to spend time with you to discuss your reservations. Maybe you're not an alcoholic and you're here by mistake. Whatever the case may be, we're willing to take the time with you to help you discover **your truth**.

For those who are ready, let's take the 1st Step together. Will all those who are taking the Steps with us this weekend please stand. This is the final First Step question:

Do you admit to your innermost self that you are an alcoholic?

Please answer one at a time, yes or no and then be seated.

[Have each person answer the question.]

Thank you. Those of you who have answered yes to this question have taken Step One. Congratulations!

Now that we have admitted we are alcoholics, let's look at what we have to do in order to recover. Just in case we're not convinced that we need a

Power Greater than ourselves, let's read the last paragraph of Chapter 3, "More About Alcoholism" again. On page 43, last paragraph, the book states:

"Once more: The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink. Except in a few cases, neither he nor any other human being can provide such a defense. His defense must come from a Higher Power."
(page 43, ¶ 3)

Let's dispel a myth that's quite often heard in the meeting rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Many well intentioned people make the statement... "When I feel like drinking, I remember where I came from... I think the drink through and I keep my memory green." Well, that's good advise provided I have a mental defense against drinking alcohol. The paragraph we just read tells us that *at certain times we don't have a mental defense against the first drink*. That implies that sometimes I *might* have a mental defense. So, sometimes I *might* be able to think the drink through... sometimes I *might* be able to keep my memory green. **BUT**, the scary thing is, **sometimes I won't**. The real scary thing is, I don't know when that "sometime" will be. And if I knew when I was going to have the mental defense, then I wouldn't be truly powerless of alcohol, would I?

So, what this paragraph is telling us is that in order for me not to drink alcohol, I must have a Power Greater than myself and **that Power** will provide my defense and keep me safe and protected from alcohol – guaranteed... of course, provided I take certain steps.

So, since we've admitted that we're powerless and we have a need to find a Power, let's proceed to the 2nd Step which is:

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

Chapter 4, "We Agnostics" gives us a lot of information and direction for us to take Step 2. Be sure to read this chapter in its entirety in addition to the other chapters we've covered.

To give us a basis for taking the Second Step we're going to cover four main points.

- 1) Do you believe or are you even **willing to believe** that there is a Power that will solve your problem?
- 2) Do you have a **conception** of that Power which makes sense to you and works for you?
- 3) Is that Power, which the book quite often refers to God, **everything**... if not, is He nothing? At this point, we'll have to make a **choice**.
- 4) **Where** are we going to find this Power?

Page 46, starting with the 3rd line in the 1st paragraph the text says:
“We found that as soon as we were able to lay aside prejudice and express even a willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves, we commenced to get results, even though it was impossible for any of us to fully define or comprehend that Power, which is God.”
(Page 46, ¶ 1)

On pages 46 & 47 the book gives us certain requirements if we are to take the 2nd Step. In a nutshell, they are:

- We have to lay aside prejudice
- We have to express a willingness to believe
- We have to come up with our own conception of God
- We have to admit the possible existence of that Power
- We have to honestly seek that Power

So, if we've met these requirements, let's look at the question on page 47, -second paragraph:

“We needed to ask ourselves but one short question. ‘Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself?’ As soon as a man can say that he does believe, or is willing to believe, we emphatically assure him that he is on his way. It has been repeatedly proven among us that upon this simple cornerstone a wonderfully effective spiritual structure can be built.”
(page 47, ¶ 2)

Let's see who is ready to proceed and take the first part of Step 2. Will the people who have completed Step One and are willing to take Step 2 please stand. I'm going to ask you the following question:

“Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?”

Please answer one at a time, *yes* or *no*, then be seated.

[Have each person answer the question.]

Thank you. Now we can move forward.

If we don't have a conception of God that makes sense to us, this chapter gives us some good ideas. The following are some of the words and descriptions the old-timers used to describe God:

- Power greater than ourselves (page 45, ¶ 1)
- All Powerful (page 49, ¶ 0)
- Guiding (page 49, ¶ 0)
- Creative Intelligence (page 46, ¶ 2 / page 49, ¶ 0)
- Spirit of the Universe (page 46, ¶ 2)
- the Realm of Spirit (page 46, ¶ 2)
- Supreme Being
- Power
- Great Reality (page 55, ¶ 3)
- The Presence of Infinite Power and Love (page 56, ¶ 4)
- Maker (page 57, ¶ 1)
- And of course, “God”

Keep in mind, these are only examples of terms found in this Chapter to describe God. Feel free to use these or any other conception you have provided it makes sense to you. Remember, use your own conception, however limited it may be. The important thing is that it's **your** conception.

Now that we 1) believe or are willing to believe and 2) we have our own conception of God, we have to consider the proposition that many people call “the Second Step Choice”. It's on page 53 in the second paragraph:

When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crises we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is or He isn't. What was our choice to be?"
(page 53, ¶ 2)

Let's take a moment to consider both sides of the coin. If we believe what our book says and we believe the experience of thousands of recovered alcoholics that have gone before us, we can easily answer this question in the affirmative. But, let's consider for a second that we choose God to be "nothing" in our lives and that he "isn't" a part of us. Where do we go from here? Well, if that be the case, we won't be able to go much further. And if we're really, truly POWERLESS, we need God now, more than ever.

So, are we all ready to proceed?

The last thing we need to look at in the Second Step is where do we find God. Well, we find our answer on page 55 when it says in the second paragraph:

"Actually we were fooling ourselves, for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured [means hidden or blocked] by calamity, by pomp, [by resentments, by fears, by guilt shame and remorse for the harms we've caused others], by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there. For faith in a Power greater than ourselves, and miraculous demonstrations of that power in human lives, are facts as old as man himself."
(page 55, ¶ 2)

So, now we know where to find God – **deep down within ourselves.**

At the end of the chapter, they tell a story of a man who had been relieved of his drink obsession and restored to sanity by the Loving hand of God. The book says on page 57, first paragraph:

"What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances [Step 1: the pain, suffering, and humiliation of his

drinking experiences] made him willing to believe. He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew.”

He took Steps 1, 2, & 3.

“Even so has God restored us all to our right minds. To this man, the revelation was sudden. [As in a spiritual experience, like Bill W. had in Towns Hospital.] Some of us grow into it more slowly. [As in a spiritual awakening as Appendix II describes as the “educational variety”.] But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him.

When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!”
(page 57, ¶ 1 – 3)

We’ve completed the first two Steps in the Program of Recovery. In order for God to disclose Himself to us, we have to draw near to him. That means we have to move forward to Step 3.

Step 3 reads:

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

Let’s clarify a couple words that confuse many people us in the Third Step.

First, the word **decision** implies that action will follow. We’re all familiar, I’m sure, with the story of the three frogs on a log... one frog *decides* to jump off... How many frogs are left on the log? ... Three. The one frog only *decided* to jump. He didn’t take any action.

Secondly, let’s look at the words... **our will and our lives**. What is our **will**? And how can we turn our **lives** over to something? Well, my **will** is my **thinking** and my life is no more than an accumulation of my **actions**.

Let’s reread the step using these new words.

“We’re going to **decide** to turn our **thoughts** and our **actions** over to God *as we understand Him.*”

Let’s begin the reading of Step 3 on page 60 after the a, b, c’s:

“Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will [our thinking] and our life [our actions] over to God as we understood Him. Just what do we mean by that, and just what do we do?”

Well, there are more requirements to be met. [**If time, read the “actor” description on pages 60 – 62. If not, continue with...**] Be sure to read pages 60 – 62. Unfortunately, we don’t have time to read the entire description the book gives us of “the actor”. Basically, the book tells us the requirements of the Third Step are:

- 1) I have to be convinced that my life, run on my own self-will, can hardly be a success.
- 2) I have to quit trying to run my life on my own self-will. **I have to quit playing God.**
- 3) I have to “let God be God” and let **Him** run my life. He knows better than I do.

Now we’re ready to make our Third Step decision together. In the next paragraph they tell us what our decision is to be:

“This is the how and the why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. [**Why?**] It didn’t work. Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our **Director**. He is the **Principal**; we are His agents. He is the **Father**, and we are His children. Most Good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom.”
(page 62, ¶ 3)

This means:

- We have to quit playing God.
- We decide God is going to **Direct** us.
- We decide to let God be the **Boss** and we’re his employees.
- We decide that God is the **Father** and we’re his kids.

Have we all made this decision, together? [**Motion for a response.**]

Great! As the result of just making this decision, the book tells us we will receive several promises. They are listed in the first paragraph of page 63:

“When we sincerely took such a position, all sorts of remarkable things followed. We had a new Employer. Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well. Established on such a footing we became less and less interested in ourselves, our little plans and designs. More and more we became interested in seeing what we could contribute to life. As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn.”
(page 63, ¶ 1)

Let’s affirm the decision we just made by reading the Third Step Prayer that’s in the next paragraph. We’ll read the entire prayer first, then we’ll say the prayer together as a group.

“We were now at Step Three. Many of us said to our Maker, as we understood Him: **“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!”** We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready; that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.”
(page 63, ¶ 2)

Will all those who have taken the first two steps and are ready to turn their thinking and actions over to God’s care please stand.

Let’s pray the **Third Step Prayer** together:

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

“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!”

Thank you. Please be seated. Congratulations on taking the first three steps.

The book tells us “this was only a beginning, though if honestly and humbly made, an effect, sometimes a very great one, was felt at once”.

Then, immediately following the Third Step we read:

“Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision [**Step 3**] was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.”
(page 63, ¶ 4)

That ends our first session. In Session 2 we will learn how to do the 4th Step inventory and we will begin it here. It’s not as difficult as some of the things you may have heard shared in meetings. **Our experience is, we can have fun with inventory and learn to laugh at ourselves and see the truth about how we were running our own lives providing we take inventory the “Big Book” way.** We’ll also cover the directions for Step 5 and we’ll prepare to complete these two Steps before we meet tomorrow morning. Please review what we’ve covered during this session and ask someone who’s gone through the work before if you have any questions during the break.

We’ll CLOSE this session with the Lord’s Prayer.

[Take a 10 or 15 minute break.]

Session #2 - Steps 4 & 5

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. Before we begin, let's have a moment of silence to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience... followed by the "Serenity Prayer"...

For anyone who came in late, as a group, we're taking the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous in meetings as they were taken in the 1940's and 50's.

During this session we will begin Step 4 and provide you will guidelines for completing your inventory. After you leave here today, you will have the opportunity to complete Step 4 and share Step 5 with your sponsor or spiritual advisor. The way Dr. Bob, our Akron co-founder, brought people through the inventory and confession phases of our program was to do it in one sitting at the same time. So, in essence, Dr. Bob and the newcomer would do Steps 4 & 5 together – more often than not in just a couple hours. Often a newcomer is too shaky to write inventory. If any writing was done at all, Dr. Bob (or whoever took the new man through the steps) would do the writing. Many times the Big Book suggests that the inventory should be written – but it doesn't say the newcomer has to do the writing. We feel it is important that the inventory be written because of a couple factors. One of them is "you can't see in your head what you can see on paper". And a second is you will need a written list of names in the 8th Step in order to make amends and restitution in Step 9. We suggest that in order to finish your 4th and 5th Steps by the time we reassemble tomorrow morning that you try it the same way Dr. Bob and the early members did by doing Steps 4 & 5 as sort of a "combined" Step. It worked for Bill, Dr. Bob, and the old-timers. It has worked for us. We're sure it can work for you too!

During our first session we took Steps 1, 2, & 3.

(Optional): Is there anyone here now who didn't have the opportunity to take the first three steps earlier and would like to do so now? If so, would you please stand. [Ask the First Step question:] **Do you concede (admit) to your innermost self that you are alcoholic?** Please answer, yes or no. [Ask the Second Step question:] **Do you now believe, or are you even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than yourself?** Please answer, yes or no. [Ask the Third Step question:] **Have**

you made a decision to turn your thinking and your actions over to the care of God *as you understand Him* – in other words: Have you decided to go through with the remaining steps in the Program of Recovery. Please answer, yes or no. Thank you, please be seated. If you answered yes to these questions, you have completed Steps One, Two, and Three.

Let's say the Third Step Prayer TOGETHER, as we did last session, to reconfirm our Third Step decision:

"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!"

Now we can move on to Step 4.

Step 4 *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*

At the bottom of page 63, the "Big Book" tells us what we need to do now that we've made our decision to proceed:

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision was vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us. Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions."

(page 63, ¶ 4, lines 1-2; page 64, lines 1-7)

Please note the book says at once. This means we take the Fourth Step immediately after Step Three. We have to get rid of those things which have been blocking us off from God or else our initial contact with our Creator won't last.

The book starts by comparing a personal inventory to a business inventory. In the first full paragraph of page 64, they write:

"Therefore, we started upon a personal inventory. This was Step Four. A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes

broke. Taking commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the **truth** about the stock-in-trade. One object is to disclose damaged or unsalable goods, to get rid of them promptly and without regret. If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself about values.” (page 64, ¶ 1)

So, we are going to conduct the equivalent of a commercial inventory on our lives. We are going to discover what blocks us off from God.

Next, the book tells us exactly what we have to do to conduct a Fourth Step inventory:

“We did exactly the same thing with our lives. We took stock honestly. First, we searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure. Being convinced that self, manifested in various ways, was what had defeated us, we considered its common manifestations.” (page 64, ¶ 2)

We are going to “take stock” of three manifestations of self-will: our **resentments**, our **fears**, and our **conduct** with emphasis on sex. We have provided copies of sheets to do our inventories on. [Introduce the Guide Booklet for Steps 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9 if it’s available.] We’re going to read the “clear-cut”, simple directions that the “Big Book” documents for us and use the sheets in conjunction to help us complete our inventories. We’re going to take the 4th Step exactly the way the Big Book prescribes. Let us reassure you, the Fourth Step is not difficult nor should it be a tedious process. Within seven pages of text, the “Big Book” gives us precise instructions on how to make a good beginning on facing and getting rid of the obstacles in our path.

The first manifestation of “self” we’re going to look at is our **resentments**. In the third paragraph on page 64, the book says:

“Resentment is the “number one” offender. It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. From it stem all forms of spiritual disease, for we have been not only mentally and physically ill, we have been spiritually sick. When the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically.”

Resentment basically means to re-feel or feel again. The “Little Big Book Dictionary” gives the following definition for resentment: “a persistent feeling of ill will and suppressed anger caused by a sense of an injustice, injury, offense, or wrong done / to resent basically means to ‘feel again’ strongly or to ‘re-live again’”.

Let’s first look at the simple step-by-step, column-by-column procedure the “Big Book” gives us for writing the resentment inventory. Six lines from the bottom of page 64, the book tells us:

“In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry.”
(page 64, ¶ 3, lines 6 – 9)

Page 65 of the Big Book gives an example of the resentment inventory. Let’s look at the handout entitled **Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet** [or page 3 of the guidebook] which lists examples of people, institutions, and principles that alcoholics are commonly resentful at. To help us get a start with the first column of our resentment inventory, we’re going to go down the list of names on this checklist. Generally, alcoholics know whom they are resentful towards. Unless you have a “deep-seated” resentment, the names on this list should help you to list the people, institutions, and principles that need to be listed in the first column of your **Resentment Inventory Sheet**. Once we’ve checked off the names on this list, we’re going to transfer them over to the four-column **Resentment Inventory Sheet** [or pages 4 and 5 of the guide]. As I read through the list of names, check the ones with whom you are resentful toward, angry with, or feel any ill will toward. Let’s begin with the names listed under the category “people” (then “institutions”, then “principles”):

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

<u>PEOPLE</u>	<u>INSTITUTIONS</u>	<u>PRINCIPLES</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Father (Step)	<input type="checkbox"/> Marriage	<input type="checkbox"/> God-Deity
<input type="checkbox"/> Mother (Step)	<input type="checkbox"/> Bible	<input type="checkbox"/> Retribution
<input type="checkbox"/> Sisters (Step)	<input type="checkbox"/> Church	<input type="checkbox"/> Ten Commandments
<input type="checkbox"/> Brothers (Step)	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Jesus Christ
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandmother	<input type="checkbox"/> Races	<input type="checkbox"/> Satan
<input type="checkbox"/> Grandfather	<input type="checkbox"/> Law	<input type="checkbox"/> Death
<input type="checkbox"/> In-Laws	<input type="checkbox"/> Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> Life After Death
<input type="checkbox"/> Husbands	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Heaven
<input type="checkbox"/> Wives	<input type="checkbox"/> Education System	<input type="checkbox"/> Hell
<input type="checkbox"/> Aunts	<input type="checkbox"/> Correctional System	<input type="checkbox"/> Sin
<input type="checkbox"/> Uncles	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health System	<input type="checkbox"/> Adultery
<input type="checkbox"/> Cousins	<input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Golden Rule
<input type="checkbox"/> Clergy	<input type="checkbox"/> Nationality	<input type="checkbox"/> Seven Deadly Sins
<input type="checkbox"/> Police	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Lawyers	<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Judges		<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Doctors	also added to the list could be:	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employer's	<input type="checkbox"/> Rehabs	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Employee's	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospitals	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Co-Workers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Creditors		
<input type="checkbox"/> Childhood Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> School Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Life Long Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> Best Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> Acquaintances		
<input type="checkbox"/> Girl Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> Boy Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> Parole Officers		
<input type="checkbox"/> Probation Officers		
<input type="checkbox"/> AA Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Service Friends		
<input type="checkbox"/> _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> _____		

Great! The first column of our resentment inventory is complete. We're going to transfer a couple names we just checked to the first column of the **Resentment Inventory Sheet** [pages 4 and 5 of the guide booklet. If using the guidebook, this sheet is a sample to get started with in class. Please use the sheet on pages 6 and 7 to make additional copies.]

Let's take a couple moments to jot down the two biggest resentments we have. Transfer the names from your **Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet** to the first column ("I'm resentful at") of our **Resentment Inventory** sheet.

[PAUSE]

[Do examples on board. But first go over directions for columns 2, 3, & 4 in the Big Book.]

Follow along on pages 64 and 65 of the Big Book and at the same time follow along with pages 4 and 5 of the guide booklet.

Second column: “*The cause*”, second instruction – 3 lines up from the bottom of page 64:

“We asked ourselves why we were angry.”

Why am I resentful, “burned up” or sore at _____? What did they do to make me angry? List all the resentments you have for each name. You could have more than one resentment toward a person. [For multiple resentments towards same person, put an “a” next to the first resentment in column 2, “b” next to the second, etc., etc.]

In the **Third column:** “*Affects My*”, third instruction – page 64, last three lines and page 65, first two lines: [We’re going to be looking at **7 areas of “self”**...]

“In most cases it was found that our self-esteem **(1)**, our pocketbooks **(2)**, our ambitions **(3)**, our personal relationships **(4)**, (including sex) **(5)** were hurt or threatened.”

In the first paragraph on page 65, the “Big Book” repeats itself:

“On our grudge list we set opposite each name our injuries. Was it our self-esteem, our security **(6)**, our ambitions, our personal, or sex relations, which had been interfered with?”

And from the lower right-hand corner of page 65 in Bill’s resentment inventory example we get pride **(7)**. That’s the **7 areas of “self”** that are affected by resentments according to the Big Book.

Remember: our **self-esteem** is how we view ourselves. Our **pride** is how we think others view us. Our **ambitions** are our plans for the future. And our [emotional] **security** is our general sense of personal well being.

When the first three columns are complete, the Big Book tells us to pray for the people we resent. Why? Because we need to rid ourselves of these resentments. In the middle of page 66 let's see what the Big Book says will happen if we hold on to these resentments:

“It is plain that a life which includes deep resentment leads only to futility and unhappiness. To the precise extent that we permit these, do we squander the hours that might have been worth while. But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a spiritual experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. We found that it is fatal. For when harboring such feeling we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit. The insanity of alcohol returns and we drink again. And with us, to drink is to die.”

(page 66, ¶ 1, lines 1-10)

Well, that's very simple, isn't it? The book says very clearly, if we continue to hold on to resentments we will drink again.

How do we get "free of anger", as the book suggests we do? The next couple paragraphs deal with prayer.

First, the "Big Book" asks us to turn back to our list because it holds the key to our future. They tell us to look at it from an entirely different angle.

On the bottom of page 66, the book states:

This was our course: We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps spiritually sick. Though we did not like their symptoms and the way these disturbed us, they, like ourselves, were sick too.

(page 66, ¶ 4, lines 1 & 2; page 67, lines 1 & 2)

The next few lines are prayers to rid our resentments.

Prayer:

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

“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.”

(page 67, lines 3-8)

[Now do a couple examples of the first three columns on the board.]

[When first three columns are complete on the board, cover the material for the fourth column in the Big Book.]

[REMINDE them to pray for the people in their first column when they have completed their third column and before going on to the fourth column.]

Let's now look at the fourth column on our resentment inventory sheets and read the directions in the second paragraph on page 67:

“Referring to our list again. Putting out of our minds the wrongs others had done, we resolutely looked for our own mistakes. Where had we been **selfish, dishonest, self-seeking** and **frightened**? Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely. Where were we to blame? The inventory was ours, not the other man's. When we saw our faults we listed them. We placed them before us in black and white. We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight.”

(page 67, ¶ 2, lines 1-11)

What's the exact nature of our wrongs? It's important that we see our part in the resentment. Let's see how we got the ball rolling with our resentments in the first place.

[Complete column four on board.] Remember: let's look at it from an entirely different angle. What did we do? What's our part - disregarding the other person entirely.

Any questions about the resentment inventory?

OK, now let's look at our fears. The last paragraph on page 67 says:

Notice that the word “fear” is bracketed alongside the difficulties with Mr. Brown, Mrs. Jones, the employer, and the wife. This short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it. It set in motion trains of circumstances which brought us misfortune we felt we didn't deserve. But did not we, ourselves, set the ball rolling?

(page 67, ¶ 3, lines 1-8)

On the top of page 68, the "Big Book" tells us that: "...fear ought to be classed with stealing. It seems to cause more trouble." Fear is a thief! It robs me from my relationship with God.

Here are the simple instructions for the fear inventory. First paragraph, page 68:

We reviewed our fears thoroughly. We put them on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them. We asked ourselves why we had them. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us? Self-reliance was good as far as it went, but it didn't go far enough. Some of us once had great self-confidence, but it didn't fully solve the fear problem, or any other. When it made us cocky, it was worse.

(page 68, ¶ 1, lines 1-8)

Let's look at our **Fear Inventory Prompt Sheets** (on the back of the Resentment Inventory Prompt Sheet) [or on page 8 of the guide booklet]. When you complete the fear inventory, take all the fears from the fourth column of your resentment inventory and transfer them to the first column of the two-column **Fear Inventory** sheet [on page 10 of guidebook] because it says in the paragraph we just read “we put [our fears] on paper, even though we had no resentment in connection with them”. We'll be using the **Fear Inventory Prompt Sheets** to get us started in class. Now, let's take a moment to check off any fears we have that are listed on the **Fear Inventory Prompt Sheet** on [page 8 of the guide]. [**Depending on time**, either read list aloud or give the class a moment or two to go down the checklist themselves.] Remember, use

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

the spaces provided to list any fears that you have that *aren't* on the prompt sheet.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of God | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Drowning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Dying | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Men |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Insanity | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Women |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Being Alone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Disease's | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Poverty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Races |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of The Unknown |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Relapse | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Abandonment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Sex | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Intimacy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Sin | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Disapproval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Self-Expression | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Rejection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Authority | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Confrontation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Heights | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Sobriety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Unemployment | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Hospitals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Responsibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Parents | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Losing A Wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Getting Old |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Losing A Husband | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Hurting Others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Losing A Child | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Violence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Animals | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Writing Inventory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Insects | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Being Alive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Police | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Jail | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Gangs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Doctor's | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Gossip |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Stealing | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Wealthy People |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Creditors | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Guns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Being Found Out | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Homosexuals & Lesbians | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Failure | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Success | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Responsibility | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Physical Pain | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fear Of Fear | |

Let's list a few fears in column 1 "I'm fearful of" on our 2-column **Fear Inventory** [page 9 of the guide].

[Time permitting, guide the class through the two-column fear inventory. [If using the guidebook, remind them to make additional

copies of the "fear Inventory" sheet on page 10. If using the **Fear Inventory** sheet, remind them extra copies are available.]

How do we get rid of fear? Take a guess. That's right, through prayer!

Page 68, paragraph three, sixth line:

We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do.

Prayer:

We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.

(page 68, ¶ 3, lines 6 -9)

The results are in the next sentence:

At once, we commence to outgrow fear.

(page 68, ¶ 3, lines 9 & 10)

Notice the book doesn't say fear goes away and never comes back again. It states that we outgrow fear. We outgrow fear because through prayer, we're asking God to direct us toward his will - to do his work - to do his bidding.

It's that simple! And the miracle is it works!

"Now about sex." The "Big Book" continues on the bottom of page 68. They suggest "many of us needed an overhauling" in this area of our lives. They say on page 69 that "we all have sex problems and we'd hardly be human if we didn't." The question is "What can we do about them?"

Well, the "Big Book" tells us to review our own conduct over the past years. Therefore, we will begin our third and final inventory.

Take out the **Review of Conduct** sheet [page 11 of the guide.] Begin to list all the people you've had relations with over the years. Usually I just advise people to focus on major relationships: family, friends, wife(s) /

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

husband(s), boyfriends / girlfriends, lovers, etc. If you're already clear that you've harmed someone that's already listed on your Resentment Inventory, then usually it's not necessary to list them again on this sheet. The purpose of this sheet is to come up with the names of the people that belong on our **Conduct Inventory** sheets and to find additional people that we've harmed through inappropriate behavior excluding sex (i.e.: thefts, physical and verbal violence, etc). Once you've listed all the names that come to you on the **Review of Conduct** sheet, then put a check mark in column two in the appropriate box if you harmed these people through your sex conduct, in another way (excluding sex), or no harm at all.

Once this list is completed, you will transfer the names of the people you've harmed to the **Conduct Inventory** [pages 12 & 13 of the guide]. The **Conduct Inventory** is a four-column inventory similar to the resentment inventory. In column 1 list the people you've hurt. In column 2 list what you did to hurt the person in column one. Also, list where you were at fault; where you had been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate. In column 3, list if you've unjustifiably aroused jealousy, suspicion, or bitterness. Then, in the fourth column we list what we *should have done instead*. We're going to use this fourth column as part of our ideal for the future. Some say the fourth column of this inventory is the most important because it will be the one that we base our future actions on.

Please be sure to review the bottom of page 68 and pages 69 and 70 with your sponsor and complete this inventory as well as the rest of the resentment and fear inventories between now and tomorrow morning.

Let's point out a couple other things in the sex conduct inventory.

Prayer:

“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.”
(page 69, ¶ 2, lines 3 & 4)

The last full paragraph on page 69 reads:

Whatever our ideal turns out to be, we must be willing to grow toward it. We must be willing to make amends where we have done harm, provided that we do not bring about still more harm in

so doing. In other words, we treat sex as we would any other problem.

Prayer:

In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter.

The right answer will come, if we want it.
(page 69, ¶ 3, lines 1-8)

In the middle of page 70 there's more prayer:

To sum up about sex:

Prayer:

“We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing.”

“If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache.”

Use the spaces provided on back of the **Review of Conduct** sheets [page 14 of the guide] to come up with a sex ideal that you believe is how God wants you to be. This sheet also lists prayers that we should be saying while completing our 4th step.

Let's briefly cover some instructions for taking the **5th Step** which is:

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

First a warning: it says on the first page of Chapter 6, “Into Action”:

“If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts

about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably they got drunk. Having persevered with the rest of the program, they wondered why they fell. We think the reason is that they never completed their housecleaning. They took inventory all right, but hung on to some of the worst items in stock. They only thought they had lost their egoism and fear; they only thought they had humbled themselves. But they had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty, in the sense we find it necessary, until they told someone else all their life story.”

A couple of important points the book points out in the 5th Step:

- “We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world.”
- “Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step.”
- “Though we have no religious conception, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion.”
- “...we search our acquaintance for a close-mouthed, understanding friend.”
- “It is important that he be able to keep a confidence; that he fully understand and approve what we are driving at; that he will not try to change our plan.”
- “When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste not time.”
- “We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk.”
- “We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it.” He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.”
- “We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.”

After the 4th & 5th Step is complete, your sponsor should direct you to page 75 of the Big Book which gives us directions for what to do when we are finished with Step 5:

“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. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"

If your sponsor does not take you through the 6th & 7th Steps after you've completed your 5th and answered the questions on the bottom of page 75, don't worry, we'll be taking Steps 6 & 7 here tomorrow morning.

[If time permits, read the last two paragraphs of Chapter 5. If short on time, skip it...]

We'll conclude this meeting with the last two paragraphs of the chapter 5:

"If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.

In this book you read again and again that faith did for us what we could not do for ourselves. We hope you are convinced now that God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him. If you have already made a decision [**Step 3**], and an inventory of your grosser handicaps [**Step 4**], you have made a good beginning. That being so you have swallowed and digested some big chunks of truth about yourself."

We wish you the very best as you leave here to complete your inventory and share it with your "sponsor". We'll see you tomorrow morning at 9am to do the remaining steps.

May God bless you and keep you until then.

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

We'll CLOSE today's portion of the workshop with a moment of silence and a prayer.

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

Session #3 – Steps 6, 7, 8, & 9 (Day 2)

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. [*Both leaders introduce themselves*] Before we begin, let's have a moment of silence to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience... followed by the "Serenity Prayer"...

Yesterday we *took* the first three steps in our Program of Recovery. We began our 4th Step inventories together in class and briefly covered the directions for sharing our inventories with our sponsors and the God of our own understanding in Step 5.

Can I have a show of hands of who completed their 4th and 5th Steps with their sponsor or spiritual advisor yesterday? [Take a count.] Congratulations! For the people who didn't complete Steps 4 & 5 we hope you will do so in the immediate future. The pioneers of our AA program showed us that it wasn't necessary to make our house cleaning a long, drawn-out, arduous process. They got their miracle quickly. And from talking to folks that have gone through the Steps in these Beginners' Classes, they too get their miracle quickly. This is living proof that if it worked for our founders in the 1930's and 40's, then it can also work for *us* in the year 2000.

We ask the people who didn't complete Steps 4 & 5 to please listen closely to what we'll be covering today. You'll be able to take the remaining steps and apply the tools we'll be discussing to your daily life once you move forward in the work. Use today's sessions as motivation to complete your personal house cleaning.

Let's read the Promises of Step 5 on page 75 of the Big Book. If we have taken our 4th and 5th Steps as the Big Book has instructed us to do, then we will have received these results on page 75. Turn to page 75, - second paragraph:

“We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may

have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.”

What a great set of promises! But we can't stop here. We must go further and take more action.

Hopefully at the end of your 5th Step your sponsor directed you to the last paragraph of page 75. The book tells us to take 1 hour between steps 5 and 6 for a quiet review. These are the questions we should have reviewed after our 5th Step. If you were not directed to do so after Step 5, then we'll take a few moments to do so now. On page 75, third paragraph, the book says:

“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. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last.

So, we turn to page 59 and look at the first five steps as written in their short form.

[*Explain how to review the steps.*]

Review Question 1: Is our work solid so far?

[Time permitting, explain the “the Wonderfully Effective Spiritual Structure” – the “arch”.]

Review Question 2: Are the stones properly in place?

Review Question 3: Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation?

Review Question 4: Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six.”

Are we all able to answer those questions to our own satisfaction? If something else came up during the review, great! Write it down and share it with your sponsor immediately.

Let's move on to Step 6 like the book suggests we do.

Step 6: *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

The Sixth Step directions are on the top of page 76 in one paragraph. They simply state:

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.”

That's pretty simple, isn't it? Don't read more into the Steps 6 and 7 than the early members of our fellowship wanted us to. They kept it really simple: Are you willing and ready to have God remove your character defects found in Steps 4 and 5? Are you ready to ask God to remove your **selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear, inconsiderateness** and any other defects that may have come up when you took your 5th Step?

Those people who have completed the first five Steps please stand. I'm going to ask you the 6th Step question:

Are you now ready and willing to let God remove your character defects? [Answer one at a time, then be seated.]

Remember, if there is something we're still holding on to, we continue to ask God for the willingness to let go of it until it comes.

So, for those of you who have answered “yes” to the 6th Step Question, it's time to take Step 7. The book tells us to say the 7th Step Prayer. I'll read the prayer to you first, then for those who are ready to move forward, we'll say the prayer together.

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

“When ready, we say something like this: ‘My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.’ We have then completed *Step Seven*.”

[Optional] The original writing of Step 7 said, “**Humbly, on our knees, asked him to remove our shortcomings.**” If you choose to say this prayer kneeling, please feel free to do so.

[Before saying the prayer together, ask for a moment of silence. Then say the prayer together.]

“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.”

[Pause at the end of the prayer.]

According to the "Big Book" we have completed Step Seven.

Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution.

Step 8 *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

At this point in our work we will need to refer back to our Fourth Step inventories. From the lists of names on our inventories we are able to compile our Eighth Step amends list. We examine our sheets for the people we have harmed by our conduct and whom we owe amends. On page 76 in the third paragraph, the "Big Book" states:

"Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we

took inventory. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. 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. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.*"

(page 76, para. 3)

We make a separate list of names even though they're already listed in our inventories. By having a separate list of names, we're able to see more clearly those people we have to make amends to.

Aside from the list of names of those we owe amends, there's a second part to this step that we don't want to overlook. Some people we will be willing to go to right away. With others, we'll have to pray for the willingness to do this. The book suggests we pray for the willingness until it comes. In the meantime, we can begin to make those amends that we are already willing to do. We have found when we begin the restitution process in conjunction with praying for the willingness to commence with the seemingly more difficult reparations, we start to cross off names we never thought we'd be willing to face. We become willing when we commence to get results from making the easier amends.

Let's move on to Step Nine.

Step 9 *Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

On the fourth paragraph on page 76, the "Big Book" provides us with some insight as to how to approach some of those to whom we owe amends:

"Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of business acquaintances and friends we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."
(page 76, para. 4, lines 1-6; page 77, lines 1-4)

In the last sentence of this paragraph, the "Big Book" clearly states our purpose for living. It tells us why we are here -- to serve God and our fellows.

The book continues by asking us to let our actions, rather than our words, demonstrate to others that we have changed. Starting with line four, the book states:

"It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense."

(page 77, lines 4-14; para. 1, lines 1-4)

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely don't like – **someone we hated or resented**. But, whether we like them or not, we must proceed. The text continues:

"The question of **how to approach the man we hated** will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend,

but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret."

(page 77, para. 1, lines 4-14)

In the next paragraph, the text even provides us with instructions on what to say and what *not* to say:

"Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worth while can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam."
(page 77, para. 2; page 78, para. 1)

The "Big Book" explains **what to do about our debts**. We may not like the sacrifice required to make good on our bills, but sacrifice we must. The process forces us to rely on God for guidance, which takes us out of self-will, and into God's will. Under God's direction, we find it much easier to make restitution than we ever thought possible. In the middle of page 78, the book states:

"Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them."
(page 78, para. 2)

The next paragraph deals with **criminal offenses**:

"Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing. Maybe we are divorced, and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it, and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble too."
(page 78, para. 3)

Next the book instructs us again to ask God for guidance. This reliance upon God is essential, if we are to outgrow the fears that have separated us from our Creator:

"Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. 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. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything."
(page 79, para. 1)

Next is an example of how to proceed when other people could be affected. Here extreme caution needs taken:

"Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, "Here I am."

We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail if she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted."

(page 79, para. 2 & 3)

The "Big Book" suggests we ask others for help before we make some of our more difficult amends. We need direction, preferably from someone who understands the inventory and restitution process. We must make sure we do not create further harm as we clean up our side of the street. At the top of page 80, the book says:

"Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink."

(page 80, para. 1)

Next is a story of a man that had to get consent from his family and business partner before proceeding:

"This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a

basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrongdoing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair, he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met widespread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago."

(page 80, para. 2-4)

The next page or so deals with **domestic troubles**. Starting with the second line from the bottom of page 80, we find:

"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with "the girl who understands." In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times,

especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him.

Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell her? Not always, we think. If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her in detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can she. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy."
(page 80, para. 5; page 81, para. 1 & 2)

In the first paragraph on page 82, we are yet again instructed to ask God for guidance as we make good on our past misdeeds:

"Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. 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. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face combat."
(page 82, para. 1)

This is an example of how we must be tactful and considerate of others as we make our amends. Nobody said it would be easy - it just has to be

done. Remember to always use God as your constant Guide. By following His direction, the most difficult situations can have a positive outcome.

In the next several paragraphs, the "Big Book" authors state quite emphatically that stopping drinking is only a beginning. We must take additional action if we are to recover from alcoholism:

"If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept he home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"
(page 82, para. 2 & 3)

Not drinking is not enough. The "Big Book" makes that very clear. The reconstruction that will need to take place in most homes may at times seem difficult. But, once again, we rely heavily on prayer and guidance from our Creator. At the top of page 83, our text states:

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly

responsible. So 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 spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it. Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them. We should not talk incessantly to them about spiritual matters. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."
(page 83, para. 1 & 2)

Here we're told that in order to achieve the vital physic change, we have to live the AA program. So, we don't just take the Steps, we *practice these principles* on a daily basis. During the next session we will be providing the information for this way of life and continued growth through the process of Step Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

The next paragraph on page 83 gives us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face:

"There may be **some wrongs we can never fully right**. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."
(page 83, para. 3)

The "Big Book" concludes the Ninth Step with another list of results. Starting at the bottom of page 83, it tells us precisely what is going to happen once we commence to clear away the wreckage of our past. It describes these results as promises. The "Big Book" is filled with promises. These are just a few of them:

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, 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.”
(page 83, para 4; page 84, para. 1)

What a message of hope! It is almost beyond comprehension that all of these wonderful events will occur if we just make our amends to those whom we have harmed. But, they will happen - that's a guarantee.

Lastly, we'd like to give you an example of someone who could not stay sober until he became willing to complete all his amends. This man is our Akron co-founder, Dr. Bob. He accomplished making all his amends in one day. Starting on the second paragraph of page 155, we read about Dr. Bob's Ninth Step:

"When our friend related his experience, the man agreed that no amount of will power he might muster could stop his drinking for long. A spiritual experience, he conceded, was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high upon the basis suggested. He told how he lived in constant worry about those who might find out about his alcoholism. He had, of course, the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of his drinking. Why, he argued, should he lose the remainder of his business, only to bring still more suffering to his family by foolishly admitting his plight to people from

whom he made his livelihood? He would do anything, he said, but that.

Being intrigued, however, he invited our friend to his home. Some time later, and just as he thought he was getting control of his liquor situation, he went on a roaring bender. For him, this was the spree that ended all sprees. He saw that he would have to face his problems squarely that God might give him mastery.

One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business.

At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since. As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four."
(page 155, para. 2 & 3; page 156, para. 1 & 2)

This concludes our discussion of Step Nine. For those who have completed the first seven steps, during the break you will have an opportunity to write your 8th Step amends and restitution list. [**Suggest using the “Amends & Restitution” sheets provided.**] It’s suggested you work on this with your sponsor. We’ll be available during the break if you need assistance.

When you leave here this afternoon, prepared to start making amends, if you are not sure how to proceed with a specific amend, ask your "sponsor" or spiritual advisor for help. This is another phase of the program where we need plenty of support Guidance from God and other people in the fellowship.

When we come back from the break, we will review Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve and also show you how to incorporate **The Four Absolutes** with your daily practice of these steps.

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

Are there any questions?

[Take a 30-minute break or less (depending on time) for 8th Step writing.]

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

Session #4 – The Four Absolutes and Steps 10, 11, & 12

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. Before we begin, let's have a moment of silence to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience... followed by the "Serenity Prayer"...

During this session we'll be covering the daily tools for living the Big Book suggests we use once we begin to make amends and restitution. In the past three sessions we've covered the directions in the Big Book for taking the first nine steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and have taken Steps 1 through 8 together as a group.

Last session we took Steps 6 & 7 together, we covered the detailed instructions in the Big Book on how to complete our 9th Step Amends, and then worked on our 8th Step Amends lists during the break.

Can I have a show of hands of those people that have completed the first 8 Steps and are willing to begin making amends? [Take a count.] If you don't have the willingness to make amends to some people, pray until it comes. In the mean time, start making the easier amends **immediately**. As we see the results of making amends to the easier people on our lists God will give us the Power and the willingness to proceed with the more difficult names. Don't fall into the "drunk trap" of not proceeding with Step 9 until you're ready to face *everyone* on your list. That's simply an excuse for not moving forward. And remember, "we agreed at the beginning to go to *any* lengths for victory over alcohol". Well, in this case "any lengths" means completing our amends.

If there are no questions about Steps 8 & 9 we will proceed to the directions for daily living the Big Book outlines for us in the rest of the steps. But before we begin Steps 10 and 11, we'd like to introduce you to additional principles our founders used for daily spiritual living. These are called the:

Four Absolutes: Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity, & Love

The Four Absolutes are principles borrowed from the Oxford Group Movement when AA was in its humble beginning. Because they were never mentioned specifically in our Steps or Traditions, some of us are

inclined to forget them. Yet, in many old time groups, especially in the Mid-West, where the solid spirit of our fellowship is so strongly amplified, the Four Absolutes are mentioned frequently.

Think about the steps that we've discussed so far this weekend and you will find that the Four Absolutes form a thread that runs through all of our principles. The Absolutes of Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity, and Love can be easily defined.

Honesty – “Is it TRUE or FALSE?”

Unselfishness – “Is it about YOU or ME?” / “How will this affect the other person?”

Purity – “Is it RIGHT or WRONG?”

Love – “Is it about FEAR or FAITH?” / “Is it UGLY or is it BEAUTIFUL?”

Members of the Oxford Groups and early AA members often referred to the Absolutes as the Four Standards or the Four Tests. Let's discuss how to use the Absolutes as a Test for God's Will or self-will. We can easily do this in conjunction with our practice of Steps 10 & 11 like the early members of AA did. The Absolutes can be used specifically when making decisions in our daily life (in conjunction with Step 10). And they can be used for checking our daily Guidance in Step 11 which the early AA members stressed as a **must**.

First, Step 10 says “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” It also tells us in the Big Book to “watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.” The defects we watch for in Step 10 are the direct opposites of the Absolutes.

Step 10 asks us to watch for and ask God to remove **selfishness**. The Oxford Group and our founders taught us to practice **Unselfishness**. Step 10 asks us to watch for and ask God to remove **dishonesty**. The Absolutes ask us to practice **Honesty**. Step 10 asks us to watch for and ask God to remove **resentment**. The Absolutes ask us to practice **Purity**. Step 10 asks us to watch for and ask God to remove **fear**. The Absolutes ask us to practice **Love**. When we spot one of the defects crop up that Step 10 tells us to watch for we can ask God to remove it and replace it with the corresponding Absolute.

We can also use the Absolutes when we have an important decision to make... or even a not so important decision for that matter. For example, if I'm faced with a decision that I don't know the immediate answer to I can "test" it against the Four Absolutes. I can ask myself "if I do _____:

- Will it be TRUE or FALSE (Absolutely **Honest**)?
- Will it be about YOU or ME or how will it affect other people involved (Absolutely **Unselfish**)?
- Will it be RIGHT or WRONG (Absolutely **Pure**)?
- And will it be about FEAR or FAITH or is it UGLY or BEAUTIFUL (Absolutely **Loving**)?"

If my decision "passes" *all four* Absolutes, then it is believed to be God's Will for me and therefore the right thing to do. If the decision "falls short" of even one of the Absolutes then it's probably a decision based on self will and will probably later place me in a position to be hurt. If I make my decision based on self will rather than God's Will, which the Four Absolutes follow, then I'm setting myself up to act out on at least one of the defects described in Step 10: **selfish, dishonest, resentful, or afraid**. Let's remember, we're either moving towards God's Will or acting upon self will. We can't do both at the same time.

OK, let's discuss how to use the Absolutes with Step 11 and our daily meditation and Quiet Times, which we'll describe in greater length during our discussion of Step 11. The early members of AA learned from Oxford Group members and Ann Smith (Dr. Bob) to have an early morning Quiet Time where they would often pray and meditate in small groups. During these Quiet Times prayers were voiced aloud or silently, Bible scriptures and other spiritual materials were read, and most importantly, Guidance for each day was received from God and written down by each member of the group. Members went into that quiet place within themselves where they could meditate and ask God for His Guidance. As thoughts came into their mind, they would write them down. After the predetermined amount of time was over or the Holy Spirit moved them to end the period of silence, they would "test" what they wrote against the Four Absolutes of Honesty, Unselfishness, Purity, and Love. Going down each item they wrote on paper, if it "passed" the "test" then it was believed to have been from God. If it didn't "pass" the "test" then that thought must have come from self. After discussion with

other members, the “God thoughts” were acted on and the “self thoughts” were discarded.

This concludes our discussion of the Four Absolutes. We hope you will begin to use these spiritual “tools” as our founders did in conjunction with the Tenth and Eleventh Steps, which we will be discussing now.

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

Turn to page 84 of the Big Book. In the second paragraph the book says:

“This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past.”

So, if Steps 4 through 9 are all about cleaning up our past, then that means we can begin to practice the principals of Step 10 when we begin to take inventory. It’s important to note that you **do not** have to wait until all your amends are complete before living Step 10 on a daily basis. The book says “*we vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past*” not *after* we clean up the past.

The text continues:

“We have entered the world of the Spirit.”

Think about what that statement means for a second. “We have entered the world of the Spirit.” No longer are we living a life run on self-will; but we begin to live life run on God’s will. Once I make a decision, in Step 3, to let God run the show then I no longer want to live life on *my* terms. I don’t even want to live life on *life’s* terms – that’s too difficult sometimes. **I want to live life on God’s terms.**

The book continues:

“Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for our lifetime. Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.

[**We did that in Step 4.**] When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. [**We did that in Steps 6 & 7.**] We discuss them with someone immediately [**Step 5**] and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone [**Steps 8 & 9**]. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.”
(Page 84, ¶ 2)

So during the day, when one of my character defects appears, I don't have to take action based on that defect. I can begin to practice the 10th Step. And if I do “act out” on a defect, then Step 10 also gives me the tools to straighten out any harm I might have caused. Once we've gone through the process of spotting the defect, asking God to remove it, discussing the problem with someone if necessary, and making amends if we've caused a harm the book tells me now to turn my thoughts towards someone that I can be helpful towards. If I happen to be at work, I can be helpful to my boss or one of my co-workers. If I'm in line at the grocery store maybe I can be helpful to the little old lady who only has one or two items in her shopping cart by letting her go in front of me. If a defect occurs while I'm in my car and I've asked God to remove it and I've seen and done my part, maybe I can turn my thoughts in the direction of someone whom I can be helpful towards by letting the other person go first at an intersection before I do. After all, the book does say “*Love and tolerance of others is our code.*” **This takes lots of practice but, with God's help and guidance, can be done if we work at it.**

As with most of the other Steps in the Big Book, we get a set of promises after Step 10. They are listed on pages 84 and 85. Let's continue reading with the last paragraph on page 84:

“And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been

removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.”

(Page 84, ¶ 3 and page 85, ¶ 0)

What a remarkable set of promises for drunks that at one time had no hope at all. We’re promised that by the time we get to Step 10 “the booze battle” will have ended, we won’t need to fight with alcohol or anything else for that matter. It says the problem is removed (remember: the main problem of the alcoholic centers in the mind – so according to this paragraph we’re restored to our “right minds”.) And alcohol continues to not be a problem for us *if* we keep in fit spiritual conditioning and continue to do the things God wants us to do. It’s important to remember that we are not cured of alcoholism but God will keep us safe and protected provided “we draw close to Him and perform his work well.”

The first full paragraph of page 85 further explains this:

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.

(Page 85, ¶ 1)

Practicing Step 10 on a daily basis takes discipline and commitment. It’s not always easy to admit when we’re wrong and to ask God to remove the obstacles in our path which have always caused us to be blocked off from Him, ourselves, and our fellow man. But we have to or else we pay the penalty of a drinking spree. And once we have entered the world of the Spirit our function is to be of utmost help to God and the people in our lives. And “acting out” on our defects will **not** place us in a position to be helpful, and will ultimately, over a period of time, cause us to drink again. That we know for certain!

So, how many of us are willing to practice the disciplines of Step 10 on a daily basis? [Ensure that all those who have commenced *the work* of the first 9 steps are prepared to do this.]

Let's read the second paragraph on page 85:

“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.”
(Page 85, ¶ 2)

OK, now we're ready for the Eleventh Step.

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.

The Eleventh Step starts at the bottom of page 85 and extends through page 88. But, as we have already seen, the Big Book has been writing about prayer and meditation throughout the Book.

[Refer to the handout entitled “**Prayers in the Big Book**”.]

At the bottom of page 85, we find:

“Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it.”

(page 85, para.3, lines 1-2; page 86, lines 1-2)

What does the Big Book mean when it says, “it works?” In essence it is telling us that prayer and meditation puts us in contact with God. That's what we've been doing by saying the prayers we've learned while going through the previous steps - making conscious contact with the God.

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

“...It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions.”
(Page 86, lines 2-4)

At night, the book suggests we review the day’s activities. Here are the directions for the “**evening review**”:

“When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe and 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.”
(Page 86, ¶ 1)

What we’ve just read are the questions that we ask ourselves when our day is done. Some people like to go through these questions and a period of meditation thereafter when “the work of the day” is finished. Others prefer to do this after they get home from their evening meeting. And some people prefer to do this immediately before they shut their eyes to go to sleep. The important thing is that you find a routine that is comfortable for *you* that you stick to it with consistency and discipline.

The next paragraph gives us suggestions **on how to begin our day** (page 86, second paragraph):

“**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. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.”

(Page 86, ¶ 2)

So the book tells us to meditate first thing in the morning.

Let's look at the sentence beginning with, "Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking..." Please concentrate on these words for a minute. They are very important. "Before we begin"- before we begin what? Before we begin listening to God. How do we know we're supposed to listen to God? Because, right afterward, it says "we ask God to direct our thinking." If we ask God to direct our thinking, doesn't it stand to reason that our next thoughts are going to be from God? We call these thoughts from God **Guidance**.

We'd like to read from a book called "What is the Oxford Group?" It was the Oxford Group's basic text and one of the source materials Bill used to write the Big Book. On page 60, in the Chapter on "**Guidance**", the author writes:

"A Quiet Time with the Holy Spirit every morning before 'the daily toil and common round' of the world commences will put us in the right key for the day. These early morning Quiet Times in which God impresses on our minds His counsel become living spots in the routine of ordinary life. The Oxford Group advocates our use of a pencil and note-book so that we may record every God-given thought and idea that comes to us during our time alone with Him, that no detail, however small, may be lost to us and that we may not shirk the truth about ourselves or any problem, when it comes to us.

It is not suggested that everything we write down during our Quiet Times necessarily comes from God. The human mind, being what it is, wanders from concentration at an outside interruption, take up a train of thought it finds hard to discard, invents or remembers a thought of its own. But to those closely in touch with God it becomes easy after a short while to differentiate between spiritual and human messages. In cases of difficulty our guidance can be 'checked up' with the teachings of the Bible [**or with the Four Absolutes as we mentioned previously**] or by conference with others who are also receiving guidance in Quiet Times."
(“What is the Oxford Group”; page 60)

Next, the Oxford Group book gives us a word about prayer:

“Prayer is the natural complement of God Direction. We cannot expect God to talk to us if we do not talk to Him, but to the Oxford Group it is not always essential continually to ask God for help in every move we make, or in every problem of our daily lives. If we have faithfully surrendered our lives to Him, God is our Pilot and knows our every movement and thought. [**Sounds a lot like Step 3 from the “Big Book”, doesn’t it?**] When we listen for His guidance during Quiet Times all requests asked or unasked are answered. Petitions are not always necessary, for if our attitude towards God is conducive to real guidance, then that in itself is Prayer.”

(“What is the Oxford Group”; page 61)

The Big Book tells us that God will provide us with the answers to all of our questions. And we will receive these answers providing we are not blocked off from Him.

Let’s go back to the Big Book on page 86, third paragraph:

“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 relax and take it easy. We don’t struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.”

(page 86, ¶ 3, lines 1-6)

So, God is going to tell us his plan for our lives in the form of inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision.

The Big Book tells us to test our thoughts. As we said earlier, we can use the **Four Absolutes** for this test. Not all our thoughts come from God. But, with time and practice we begin to rely upon these thoughts. On the top of page 87, the Big Book says:

“What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable

that we are going to be inspired at all times. We may pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.”
(Page 87, lines 1-9)

To protect ourselves from absurd actions and ideas, we must test our thoughts to separate self-will from God’s will. God’s will has to grow, so it is important to discuss these inspirations or thoughts with a sponsor or spiritual advisor.

Next paragraph:

“We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn’t work. You can easily see why.”
(Page 87, ¶ 1)

The Book is giving us suggestions to create a healthy prayer life. First, we pray for freedom from self-will. And secondly, we never request for ourselves only. But we can request for ourselves if others will be helped.

The next paragraph tells us how to share Prayer and Quiet Times with other people:

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

(Page 87, ¶ 2)

The next paragraph tells us how to practice the 11th Step during the day in conjunction with Step 10:

“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.”

(Page 87, ¶ 3, lines 1 and 2)

The next paragraph says that prayer and meditation “[It] works- it really does.”

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

But, what if we don't receive any God given thoughts or guidance? Well, this can happen at any time. Remember, all “we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” If we don't receive any guidance, it means we have work to do. Maybe we're not following God's will in some area of our lives, or, maybe we haven't made necessary amends. Maybe it's time for us to go through the Steps again as in an “annual or semi-annual house cleaning”. Whatever the case, we need to take the actions necessary to re-establish our connection with our Creator.

So, in our effort to fulfill AA's promise of “practice makes progress”, in a moment we're going to shut off the tape so we can get quiet and following the directions for the Morning Prayer and Meditation that the Big Book and many other spiritual books suggest. As a group, let's experience together what it's like to share our Quiet Time together like the book says on page 87 and like the early members of our fellowship stressed.

[Shut off tape.]

[Lead the group through Quiet Time (Group Prayer and Meditation).
You can use the following sample outline:

- Let's begin by asking God to direct our thinking, and ask Him to remove from us from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.
- Take a moment to think about the twenty-four hours ahead and consider your plans for the day. If when thinking about your day you face indecision or if your not able to determine which action to take, ask God for inspiration and an intuitive thought or a decision. Remember relax and take it easy. Don't struggle.
- **Write down any thoughts that come to you.** Later, they can be "check up" against the Four Absolutes and the principles of our Steps. **[Take 1 – 2 minutes, whatever seems appropriate, to get quiet and practice written Guidance.]**
- Let's conclude this 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. Remember to ask God especially for freedom from self-will.
- Let's conclude our Quiet Time with the Third and Seventh Step Prayers [use the cards if you need to or refer to pages 63 and 76 if you don't know the prayer by memory:

“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!”

[Pause]

“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.”

[If time permits, ask if anyone would like to share their Guidance from the Quiet Time.]

[Turn on tape.]

Before we proceed to Step 12, let's read the last paragraph on page 88 which says:

“We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. Faith without works is dead. The next chapter is entirely devoted to Step Twelve.”
(Page 88, ¶ 2)

Prayer and meditation take dedication and practice. If we do the work, we will receive the rewards- a life filled with health, happiness and serenity beyond our wildest dreams.

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.*

There are three parts to the Twelfth Step:

- a) Having had a spiritual awakening as **the** result of the first eleven Steps. (An explanation of the “Spiritual Experience” can be found on page 569, Appendix II.)
- b) Carrying **this** message to other alcoholics.
- c) And to practice the principles of the first eleven Steps.

If you've had the Spiritual Awakening as the result of taking the actions in Steps one through eleven, then you're ready to carry our life-saving and life-changing message to others.

Let's concentrate on carrying this message to other alcoholics as the basis of our discussion of Step 12.

Chapter 7 of the Big Book tells us exactly how to make a “Twelve Step call”. Here are some of the main points it describes. We suggest you read the chapter in its entirety and discuss its contents with you sponsor or other members of your group.

Page 89, first paragraph:

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail. This is our twelfth suggestion: Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when other fail.”
(Page 89, ¶ 1)

More promises are given in the next paragraph:

“Life will take on new meaning. To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you, to have a host of friends—this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it. Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives.”
(Page 89, ¶ 2)

The rest of this chapter, for the most part, is step-by-step, clear-cut directions on how to make a Twelfth Step call and work with a newcomer.

Here are the directions. Top of page 90:

“When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him. If he does not want to stop drinking, don’t waste time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity.”
(Page 90, ¶ 1)

Skip to the third paragraph:

“Don’t deal with him when he is very drunk, unless he is ugly and the family needs your help. Wait for the end of the spree, or at least for a lucid interval. Then let his family or a friend ask him if he wants to quit for good and if he would go to any extreme to do so. If he says yes, then his attention should be drawn to you as a person who has recovered.”
(Page 90, ¶ 3)

Next paragraph:

“If he does not want to see you, never force yourself upon him.”
(Page 90, ¶ 4)

Next page, third paragraph:

“See your man alone, if possible. [**That means without the family being present. It’s vital to bring another member of the AA Fellowship with you on a Twelfth Step call.**] At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself.”
(Page 91, ¶ 3)

Last paragraph of the page:

“When he sees you know all about the drinking game, commence to describe yourself as an alcoholic. Tell him how baffled you were, how you finally learned that you were sick. Give him an account of the struggles you made to stop. Show him the mental twist which leads to the first drink of a spree. We suggest you do this as we have done it in the chapter on alcoholism. If he is alcoholic, he will understand you at once. He will match your mental inconsistencies with some of his own.”
(Page 91, ¶ 4, top of page 92)

Second paragraph of page 92:

“Continue to speak of alcoholism as an illness, a fatal malady. Talk about the conditions of body and mind which accompany it. Keep his attention focussed mainly on your personal experience. Explain that many are doomed who never realize their predicament.”
(Page 92, ¶ 2)

Top of page 93 in Italics:

“Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely. If the man be agnostic or atheist, make it emphatic that he does not have to agree with your conception of God. He can choose any conception he likes, provided it makes sense to him. The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.”
(Page 93, ¶ 0)

Page 94, first paragraph:

“Outline the program of action, explaining how you made a self-appraisal, how you straightened out your past and why you are now endeavoring to be helpful to him. It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him.”
(Page 94, ¶ 1)

Page 95, middle of the first paragraph – 8 lines down:

“You will be most successful with alcoholics if you do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for his inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellowship. Tell him that if he wants to get well you will do anything to help.”
(Page 95, ¶ 1)

If you're not successful with this prospect, the first paragraph on page 96 tells us to just seek out someone else that *is* interested:

“Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you. If you leave such a person alone, he may soon become convinced that he cannot recover by himself. To spend too much time on any one situation is to deny some other alcoholic an opportunity to live and be happy.”
(Page 96, ¶ 1)

Page 100 gives a description of the relationship between a sponsor and the protégé:

“Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen.”
(Page 100, ¶ 1)

Back in the Third Step on page 63 it said, “we have a new employer...” Well, if we have a new employer, that means we’re the employee. If we’re an employee, that means we have a job to do. On page 102 they give us our job description. It says:

“Your job now is to be at the place where you may be of maximum helpfulness to others, so never hesitate to go anywhere if you can be helpful. You should not hesitate to visit the most sordid spot on earth on such an errand. Keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.”
(Page 102, ¶ 2)

By taking the Steps and following the directions, we will have the spiritual awakening that the first part of Step 12 talks about.

The remaining chapters of the text, Chapters 8, 9, 10, & 11 are about practicing “these principles in all our affairs.”

On page 132, first full paragraph, it says:

“But we aren’t a glum lot. If newcomers could see no joy or fun in our existence, they wouldn’t want it. We absolutely insist on enjoying life.”
(Page 132, ¶ 1)

Next paragraph it says:

“So we think cheerfulness and laughter make for usefulness. Outsiders are sometimes shocked when we bust into merriment over a seemingly tragic experience out of the past. But why shouldn’t we laugh? We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.”

“Everybody knows that those in bad health, and those who seldom play, do not laugh much. So let each family play together or separately as much as their circumstances warrant. We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.”
(Page 132, ¶ 2 & 3)

Let’s end our fourth session together with a couple readings from the Eleventh Chapter, “A Vision for You”. Last line of 162:

“Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one man with this book in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin.”

“We know what you are thinking. You are saying to yourself: ‘I’m jittery and alone. I couldn’t do that.’ But you can. You forget that you have just now tapped a source of power much greater than yourself. To duplicate, with such backing, what we have accomplished is only a matter of willingness, patience and labor.”
(Page 162, ¶ 3; page 163, ¶ 1)

Page 164, second paragraph:

“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”

“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.”

“May God bless you and keep you—until then.”
(Page 164, ¶ 2, 3, & 4)

For additional copies visit <http://back.to/aabasics> on the Internet

We'd like to thank each and every one of you for allowing us to be your guide during the past 2 days. We hope you continue to do this work and help others in taking the Twelve Steps as the early members of our Fellowship simply outlined in the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our prayer for you is that you leave here today with the motivation for teaching a 12 Step Beginners' Class or to even start a Beginners' Class meeting in your neighborhood, town, or even as part of your home group. The format that we've used is suggestive only, and there is no one way to teach these classes. Every group that teaches them does it a little differently depending on what their local needs are.

If you'd like a copy of the format we've used this weekend please, and you don't have Internet access, see one of us during the break before our closing speaker or at the close of the workshop. If you do have access to the Internet, you can get a copy online at [**http://back.to/aabasics**](http://back.to/aabasics). Also, if you've ordered a copy of the tapes, please see Paul after our closing speaker meeting.

Thank you all once again and may God's Grace continue to Bless you all.

[15 minute break.]