



# MEDITATIONS

**22 DAILY  
DEVOTIONS  
ON THE 12 STEPS  
FOR CHRISTIANS  
IN RECOVERY**

**BY ROGER B.**

## A.A. Bible Meditations

The meditations which follow were designed for Christian alcoholics in recovery. Each meditation sets forth a bible passage, followed by a discussion of Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) philosophy and/or the A.A. way of life. A.A. literature, such as *Alcoholic Anonymous*, called *The Big Book*, is referenced and quoted. All bible passages are from the New Living Translation, unless noted. Each meditation is self-contained with all the material needed for the meditation quoted in the material itself. Each meditation has been designed to be wholly contained.

I began composing these meditations in early 2002. My goal was to compose enough meditations to fill a year-long book of “daily meditations” – in other words, to compose at least 365 meditations. I composed and saved several messages on a document on my computer. When I felt confident that my project was surely underway and there was a solid inventory of meditations, I began e-mailing these meditations to a list of interested friends and acquaintances. I sent my first e-mail “A.A. Bible” meditation on June 4, 2002.

I e-mailed the meditations to this anonymous list on Monday through Friday of each week. I encouraged feedback from the recipients and this feedback has helped me to polish and revise the meditations. Over the years, list members began encouraging others to join and, as a result, the number of recipients on my “A.A. Bible Meditations List” has grown significantly.

I have now composed around 400 meditations and I continue to send them by e-mail on Monday through Friday of each week. On occasion, my sending of the messages is suspended while I am on vacation or traveling on business. Any and all are welcome to join my list. If you want to join, simply e-mail me at [Roger.Baron@usd.edu](mailto:Roger.Baron@usd.edu) with “join A.A. Bible” in the subject line. I will add you to the list. You are free to unsubscribe at any time.

Cynthia Sloan joined my list in early April, 2012. Not long thereafter Cynthia asked if I would be interested in compiling a selection of my meditations in one document. Cynthia proposed making this document available on this website. I was honored to receive Cynthia’s request. In accordance with Cynthia’s recommendation, I am providing a sampling of 22 meditations which are sequenced in the order of the 12 steps of recovery. Please note that these meditations are not designed to present an exhaustive discussion of each step, nor are they designed to replace the role of a sponsor or spiritual leader. They are simply meditations offered for one’s reflection on a daily basis.

Two of my favorite quotations, one from scripture and one from the *Big Book*, are set forth below. God bless and protect you, Cynthia, and all who read these words.

Roger B.  
Vermillion, South Dakota

*“... for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.”*  
- 2 Peter 2:19

“Cling to the thought that, in God’s hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have – the key to life and happiness for others. With it you can avert death and misery for them.” - *Big Book*, page 124

# Step One.

**We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**

## **The Insanity of the First Drink**

*Proverbs 23:29-35*

**W**ho has anguish? Who has sorrow? Who is always fighting? Who is always complaining? Who has unnecessary bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes? It is the one who spends long hours in the taverns, trying out new drinks. Don't let the sparkle and smooth taste of wine deceive you. For in the end it bites like a poisonous serpent; it stings like a viper. You will see hallucinations, and you will say crazy things. You will stagger like a sailor tossed at sea, clinging to a swaying mast. And you will say, "They hit me, but I didn't feel it. I didn't even know it when they beat me up. When will I wake up so I can have another drink?"

### **Meditation**

This is believed to be the longest passage, found in all of the Bible, which addresses alcohol and alcoholism. The cycle, well-known to alcoholics, is described. The description includes the following words or depictions: anguish, sorrow, fighting, complaining, bruises, bloodshot eyes, hallucinations, crazy talk, staggering, and numbness to pain. And, of course, all of this is followed by the desire to have "another drink."

On pages 37-38 of the Big Book, we can find a similar description of the insanity which is seen in the life of an alcoholic. Starting at the bottom of page 37, it states:

Our behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for jay-walking. He gets a thrill out of skipping in front of fast-moving vehicles. He enjoys himself for a few years in spite of friendly warnings. Up to this point you would label him as a foolish chap having queer ideas of fun. Luck then deserts him and he is slightly injured several times in succession. You would expect him, if he were normal, to cut it out. Presently he is hit again and this time has a fractured skull. Within a week after leaving the hospital a fast-moving trolley car breaks his arm. He tells you he has decided to stop jay-walking for good, but in a few weeks he breaks both legs.

On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by his continual promises to be careful or to keep off the streets altogether. Finally, he can no longer work, his wife gets a divorce and he is held up to ridicule. He tries every known means to get the jaywalking idea out of his head. He shuts himself up in an asylum, hoping to mend his ways. But the day he comes out he races in front of a fire engine, which breaks his back. Such a man would be crazy, wouldn't he?

You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane.

One of the primary reasons for the solution found in Alcoholics Anonymous is that we recognize that alcoholism is a disease which we cannot cure on our own. We don't have the resources. As described at the top of page 39, "But the actual or potential alcoholic, with hardly an exception, will be absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self-knowledge."

### **Prayer**

God, because of my human nature, I am unable to provide a defense to the first drink and the insanity that follows. Thank you for protecting me. Please continue to protect me.

## **Words of Truth, Sharp and Piercing**

*Revelation 1:13-18*

**A**nd standing in the middle of the lamp stands was the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were bright like flames of fire. His feet were as bright as bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was as bright as the sun in all its brilliance.

### **Meditation**

"And a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth." This passage describes the word of God. The words spoken by Jesus on earth were piercing. They cut to the core. Those who opposed Jesus did so out of greed, a desire to protect the status quo. Those who truly listened to Jesus' words with an open heart were affected in a way like never before. Jesus' words were full of truth, love, and compassion. But, his words were also pointed and drastic when necessary.

Similarly, the words of John the Baptist were also pointed and drastic. For example, from Matthew 3:7,10, "when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming to be baptized, he denounced them. 'You brood of snakes!' he exclaimed.... 'Even now the ax of God's judgment is poised, ready to sever your roots. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.'"

God's hand is ever present in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which was founded by Bill W. and Dr. Bob. And the message of A.A. similarly pierces deep into the mind and heart of an alcoholic. It is sometimes said in A.A. meetings, "Once you know, you can't 'not know.'" This describes how alcoholics may become acquainted with an accurate description of their malady. They may "wish" that they were not alcoholics, but if they are alcoholics, then nothing can change that. As stated on page 33 of the Big Book, "We have seen the truth demonstrated again and again: 'Once

an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.' Commencing to drink after a period of sobriety, we are in a short time as bad as ever. If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol."

The phenomenon of the "wishful thinking" alcoholic is described on pages 151-52 of the Big Book, "Now and then a serious drinker, being dry at the moment says, 'I don't miss it at all. Feel better. Work better. Having a better time.' As ex-problem drinkers, we smile at such a sally. We know our friend is like a boy whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. He fools himself. Inwardly he would give anything to take half a dozen drinks and get away with them."

When the newcomer comes to A.A., he sees that there are people just like him who have found a way to live life without alcohol. He knows that there is a "solution" and that there is a way out for him. He may decide to "go back out" and turn away from his A.A. acquaintances when he wants to drink. But when he gets burned badly enough by alcohol, he may once again seek the A.A. solution.

### **Prayer**

Jesus, thank you for providing me with your word, both in scripture and through the A.A. Program. Your words are sharp and piercing at times, but they are exactly what I need. They are words of truth.

## Step Two.

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

### **The Lord Is Close to the Brokenhearted and Crushed in Spirit**

*Psalm 34:17-18*

**T**he Lord hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those who are crushed in spirit.

### **Meditation**

It was a tremendous relief for us when we found that God does indeed rescue the lost. We saw this firsthand when we met and talked with others in A.A. who had been just like us and, for whom, all was lost. We saw that God restored them to their sanity and gave these people a sane and useful life. Step Two provides that we "Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." In the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (the Twelve by Twelve), in connection with the discussion

of the Step Two, it states on page 28, “Sometimes A.A. comes harder to those who have lost or rejected faith than to those who never had any faith at all, for they think they have tried faith and found it wanting. They have tried the way of faith and the way of no faith. Since both ways have proved bitterly disappointing, they have concluded there is no place whatever for them to go. The roadblocks of indifference, fancied self-sufficiency, prejudice, and defiance often prove more solid and formidable for these people than any erected by the unconvinced agnostic or even the militant atheist... Obviously, the dilemma of the wanderer from faith was that of profound confusion.”

Was God to be there for those of us who had lost faith? We seemed to have gotten pretty far on our own. There is an answer for this on page 29 of the Twelve by Twelve, “[We can tell this person] ‘The will to win would carry us through. But then alcohol began to have its way with us. Finally, when all our score cards read zero and we saw that one more strike would put us out of the game forever, we had to look for our lost faith. It was in A.A. that we rediscovered it. And so can you.’”

Further explanation as to why we had lost our faith is given on page 31 of the Twelve by Twelve, “[We can explain] ‘As psychiatrists have often observed, defiance is the outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic. So it’s not strange that lots of us have had our day at defying God Himself. Sometimes it’s because God has not delivered us the good things in life which we specified, as a greedy child makes an impossible list for Santa Claus. More often, though, we had met up with some major calamity, and to our way of thinking lost out because God deserted us. The girl we wanted to marry had other notions; we prayed God that she’d change her mind, but she didn’t. We prayed for healthy children, and were presented with sick ones, or none at all. We prayed for promotions at business, and none came. Loved ones upon whom we heartily depended, were taken from us by so-called acts of God. Then we became drunkards... When we encountered A.A., the fallacy of our defiance was revealed. At no time had we asked what God’s will was for us; instead we had been telling Him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God and defy Him, too. Belief meant reliance, not defiance. In A.A., we saw the fruits of this belief: men and women spared from alcohol’s final catastrophe.’”

### **Prayer**

God, thank you for being there when I really needed you. There is no doubt in my mind that you are close indeed to those who are down and out. Help me to help you by carrying this message to others who still suffer.

## **He Always Remains Faithful, for He Cannot Deny Himself**

*2 Timothy 2:13, New American Standard*

**I**f we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.

### **Meditation**

For many of us who are now in recovery, we went through a period in our lives where after having once had acquired faith, we became “faithless.” This is described on

page 28 of the Twelve by Twelve, in connection with the discussion on Step Two, as follows, "Consider next the plight of those who once had faith, but have lost it. There will be those who have drifted into indifference, those filled with self-sufficiency who have cut themselves off, those who have become prejudiced against religion, and those who are downright defiant because God has failed to fulfill their demands... Sometimes A.A. comes harder to those who have lost or rejected faith than to those who never had any faith at all, for they think they have tried faith and found it wanting."

The good news about the A.A. Program is that it allows us to get reconnected with God in a most wonderful and reaffirming way. When we reached our bottoms, we were given the opportunity to learn that despite our own "faithlessness," God was still there for us. As stated in Paul's words to Timothy which are set forth above, even "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself."

We are assured in the ABC's of "How It Works" that God will help us. We are told that "God could and would [relieve our alcoholism] if He were sought." We are not told that God "might" or "may" relieve our alcoholism. We are told that He "could and would" relieve our alcoholism "if He were sought."

We are careful in A.A. to keep the approach to God on a neutral basis. In so doing, we enjoy God's graciousness in that He allows us to refer to him in a number of ways including the simple manner of "Higher Power." This is explained on page 28 of the Big Book, "We have no desire to convince anyone that there is only one way by which faith can be acquired. If what we have learned and felt and seen means anything at all, it means that all of us, whatever our race, creed, or color are the children of a living Creator with whom we may form a relationship upon simple and understandable terms as soon as we are willing and honest enough to try. Those having religious affiliations will find here nothing disturbing to their beliefs or ceremonies. There is no friction among us over such matters."

The author of the story "The Perpetual Quest" describes her reconnection with God on page 397 of the 4th edition of the Big Book as follows, "Just as importantly, I believe that I recovered through the grace of a Higher Power, despite the fact that I was very angry and wanted nothing to do with God when I arrived at Alcoholics Anonymous. In fact, I did not need to find God. I only needed an open mind, and the spirit found me."

### **Prayer**

Today, I thank you God for always being true to yourself and for always being there ready to accept me back. I also thank you for allowing your spirit to reach me and countless other alcoholics who had previously become faithless. Help me today to do your will by always being ready, willing, and able to share my own personal story of recovery to others who may benefit from hearing it.

# Step Three.

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

## Keeping the Faith During Turbulent Times

*Matthew 8:23-27*

**T**hen Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. Suddenly, a terrible storm came up, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went to him and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" And Jesus answered, "Why are you afraid? You have so little faith!" Then he stood up and rebuked the wind and waves, and suddenly all was calm. The disciples just sat there in awe. "Who is this?" they asked themselves. "Even the wind and waves obey him!"

### **Meditation**

This story from the Gospel of Matthew proves that we are not immune from storms and unrest just because we are with God. Indeed, life is full of stormy conditions. We each have our own challenges and obstacles with which to cope. This is how we learn our lessons in life.

But this story does prove that with God we are always safe. God can provide us safety and serenity in the midst of life's storms. Can you imagine the bewilderment and amazement of the disciples in this boat? They were very much afraid so they woke the master and he rebuked them first for being afraid and then He rebuked the wind and waves. Assuming that Jesus then returned to sleep, can't you just imagine the discussion of the disciples about this amazing development!

In A.A. we can find our way to peace and serenity, but that does not mean we will not have difficulties. Stories by countless A.A. members across the world recount tragedy after tragedy which our members go through during sobriety. We experience death of loved ones, illnesses, financial woes, and every other kind of turbulent condition. Yet, with the help of A.A. and by the grace of God, we can go through these situations and become stronger, more spiritual, more serene. We can emerge on the other side of these difficulties.

In connection with the discussion of Step Three, "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him," the Twelve by Twelve states on page 38, "When World War II broke out, this spiritual principle had its first major test. A.A.'s entered the services and were scattered all over the world. Would they be able to take discipline, stand up under fire, and endure the monotony and misery of war? Would the kind of dependence [upon God] they had learned in A.A. carry them through? Well, it did. They had even fewer alcoholic lapses or emotional binges than A.A.'s safe at home did. They were just as capable of endurance and valor as any other soldiers. Whether in Alaska or on the Salerno beachhead, their dependence upon a Higher Power worked. And far from being a weakness, this dependence was their chief source of strength."



## Prayer

God, help me remember that when I face storms and tragedies in this life on earth that You are always there to help me through them. With you on my side, there is no obstacle or turbulent condition which is too great for me to handle.

## The Foundation

*Matthew 7:24-29*

“**A**n anyone who listens to my teaching and obeys me is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the flood waters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse, because it is built on rock. But anyone who hears my teaching and ignores it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will fall with a mighty crash.” After Jesus finished speaking, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, for he taught as one who had real authority – quite unlike the teachers of religious law.

## Meditation

These words of Jesus remind us that through faith in Christ and by adopting a Christian way of life, we can safely journey through all storms. There is a saying sometimes heard in A.A. meetings that goes along the line of “Turning my will and life over to God will give me peace and serenity. It does not mean that I will not have storms in my life, but it means that God will give me peace and serenity through storms.” If we have a solid foundation in Christ and we follow and practice his words, we can handle whatever is placed in front of us.

We alcoholics are hesitant to yield control. Early sobriety can be a trying time, but so can any period of sobriety if we try to take back control and run things our way. “Our way” has characteristically been a life of self-reliance, pursuing selfish goals, dodging fears and furthering resentments. The Big Book tells us, on page 68, that there is a better way. “We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does he enable us to match calamity with serenity.” This last sentence is somewhat awkward, but it delivers a powerful message. It tells us that we will have serenity through any calamity, to the extent that we have surrendered ourselves to God’s will for us.

The Big Book goes on to tell us that reliance upon God is indeed the way of strength. “We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength... We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do.”

## Prayer

Today, I renew my commitment to surrender my life and will over to the care of God. I pray that I do all the things necessary to continue to fortify my foundation in Christ and that I will remember Christ’s teachings and that I will try my best to implement them in my life today!

# Step Four.

## Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

### Keeping Our Natural Instincts in Check

*Ephesians 2:1-3, New American Standard Bible*

**A**nd you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

#### **Meditation**

Here Paul reminds the Ephesians of their former way of living – living in lust, indulging in the desires of flesh and mind. Certainly this is a manner of living with which the alcoholic is well acquainted. As we come into A.A., we find the need to make a “searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves” in accordance with the fourth step. In this process we learn that we alcoholics have allowed our instincts to run rampant in our lives. But, these basic instincts are God-given and we should remember that. On page 42 of the Twelve by Twelve, we read under Step Four, “Creation gave us instincts for a purpose. Without them we wouldn’t be complete human beings. If men and women didn’t exert themselves to be secure in their persons, made no effort to harvest food or construct shelter, there would be no survival. If they didn’t reproduce, the earth wouldn’t be populated. If there were no social instinct, if men cared nothing for society of one another, there would be no society. So these desires – for the sex relation, for material and emotional security, and for companionship – are perfectly necessary and right, and surely God-given.”

We became both fueled by alcohol and also blinded by alcohol. If we found we felt good by indulging in a behavior, we doubled and tripled our efforts so we could double and triple our pleasure. If we keep reading on page 42 of the Twelve by Twelve, we find, “Yet these instincts, so necessary for our existence, often far exceed their proper functions. Powerfully, blindly, many times subtly, they drive us, and insist upon ruling our lives. Our desires for sex, for material and emotional security, and for an important place in society often tyrannize us. When thus out of joint, man’s natural desires cause him trouble, practically all the trouble there is. No human being, however good, is exempt from these troubles. Nearly every serious emotional problem can be seen as a case of misdirected instinct. When that happens, our great natural assets, the instincts, have turned into physical and mental liabilities.”

Through the A.A. Program, we can find a way to live peacefully without alcohol. Then we can attempt to live our lives in a way which allows us to keep our natural instincts in check. As we are told in the Twelve by Twelve, these instincts are not bad or evil. Indeed, the exact opposite is true – these instincts are given to us by God. With

alcohol in our lives, we were unable to keep them in check. With alcohol out of our lives, we now have the opportunity to live our lives the way God intended. We have the ability to see in much clearer light how these instincts are part of us and how we can keep them in check.

### **Prayer**

God, I pray that today and every day I will keep my natural instincts in check. With your help, I can do this.

## **Dealing with our Fears**

*Luke 12:4-5*

[Jesus said] “Dear friends, don’t be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill the body; they cannot do any more to you. But I’ll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill people and then throw them into hell.”

### **Meditation**

Jesus assures us here that we should be without fear, except for a healthy fear of God. These words are important for us because fear plays a big role in the life of an alcoholic.

We are told on page 67 of the Big Book, in connection with our Step Four inventory, “This short word [fear] 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 are, however, fortunate because the A.A. Program tells us how to deal with our fears. On page 68 we are told, “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.”

After analyzing our “fears” and pinpointing them, we still need to eliminate them. This is where our faith is important and this is where the reassuring words of Jesus, quoted above, become much appreciated. Continuing on page 68, we read, “Perhaps there is a better way – we think so. For we are now on a different basis; the basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns.... We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear.”

When we get out of ourselves and make a sincere effort to do God’s will in our lives, we begin to rely on God and outgrow fear. Thank God that we have the ability to deal with our fears through this A.A. Program. Living a life based on fear is no fun. When we find the spiritual path and align ourselves with God, we can begin living a life without fear. For some of us, a life without fear, seemed impossible. Today, we know that such a life is attainable.

### **Prayer**

Thank you, Jesus, for saying these words and giving me such an important guiding principle. With your help, I will live my life today without fear, except the fear of offending you, my God. Please keep me under Your protection.

## Step Five.

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

### **Forgiveness**

*John 20:22-23*

**T**hen [Jesus] breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you refuse to forgive them, they are unforgiven.”

### **Meditation**

Jesus made it perfectly clear that he came to forgive sins. God forgives sinners. Jesus’ death on the cross was reconciliation for the sins of man. On top of all of this, Jesus extended the power to forgive sins to his disciples who remained on earth following his ascension into Heaven.

Step Five of the A.A. Program provides, “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” It states on page 56 of the Twelve by Twelve, “Certain distressing or humiliating memories, we tell ourselves, ought not be shared with anyone. These will remain our secret. Not a soul must ever know. We hope they’ll go to the grave with us. Yet if A.A.’s experience means anything at all, this is not only unwise, but is actually a perilous resolve. Few muddled attitudes have caused us more trouble than holding back on Step Five.” Further on down on pages 56-57, we learn, “This practice of admitting one’s defects to another person is, of course, very ancient. It has been validated in every century, and it characterizes the lives of all spiritually centered and truly religious people... It seems plain that the grace of God will not enter to expel our destructive obsessions until we are willing to try this.”

We can also read on pages 57-58 of the Twelve by Twelve, “Until we had talked with complete candor of our conflicts, and had listened to someone else do the same thing, we still didn’t belong. Step Five was the answer. It was the beginning of true kinship with man and God. This vital step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be forgiven, no matter we had thought or done. Often it was while working on this step with our sponsors or spiritual advisers that we first

felt truly able to forgive others, no matter how deeply we felt they had wronged us. Our moral inventory had persuaded us that all-round forgiveness was desirable, but it was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too."

In the Big Book, we find directions about selecting the person to hear our Step Five on page 74, "Rightly and naturally, we think well before we choose the person or persons with whom to take this intimate and confidential step. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and, of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority who duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem. Of course, we sometimes encounter people who do not understand alcoholics."

### **Prayer**

By your life and death, Jesus, you made it abundantly clear that God forgives sins. Help me to do my part by seeking forgiveness through your disciples here on earth. I pray also that I extend forgiveness to all those who have trespassed against me.

## **Cleansing Through Confession**

*Matthew 3:1-6, New Century Version*

**A**bout that time John the Baptist began preaching in the desert area of Judea. John said, "Change your hearts and lives because the kingdom of heaven is near." John the Baptist is the one Isaiah the prophet was talking about when he said: "This is a voice of one who calls out in the desert: 'Prepare the way for the Lord. Make the road straight for him.'" John's clothes were made from camel's hair, and he wore a leather belt around his waist. For food, he ate locusts and wild honey. Many people came from Jerusalem and Judea and all the area around the Jordan River to hear John. They confessed their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River.

### **Meditation**

In this passage we see that John the Baptist had proven himself to be very effective at providing a forum for the Israelites to confess their sins and be purified. It seems that some people seem to be especially gifted at hearing confessions of others. They seem to be specially gifted in being able to provide the appropriate forum to allow this to happen and to allow God's wonderful grace to flow in.

The fifth step of our program provides that we "Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs." In the Big Book on page 72 it states, "Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path. We have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained in a rough way what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our personal inventory. Now these are about to be cast out. This requires action on our part, which, when complete, will mean that we have admitted to God, to

ourselves, and to another human being, the exact nature of our defects. This brings us to the Fifth Step in the program of recovery...”

These specially gifted people who hear our fifth steps are instruments of God. They seem to know when to speak, how to alleviate fear and tension, how to ask just the right question at just the right time. On pages 73-74 of the Big Book we read, “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. Those of us belonging to a religious denomination which requires confession must, and of course, will want to go to the properly appointed authority whose duty it is to receive it. Though we have no religious connection, we may still do well to talk with someone ordained by an established religion. We often find such a person quick to see and understand our problem.”

### **Prayer**

God, I pray that I continue to remember and live by this important principle – that I must be entirely honest with you and with somebody if I expect to live long and happily in this world.

## Step 6.

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

**and**

## Step 7.

**Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**

## **God as our Source of Strength against Temptation**

*James 1:13-18, New Century Version*

**W**hen people are tempted, they should not say, “God is tempting me.” Evil cannot tempt God, and God himself does not tempt anyone. But people are tempted when their own evil desire leads them away and traps them. This desire leads to sin, and

then the sin grows and brings death. My dear brothers and sisters, do not be fooled about this. Every good action and every perfect gift is from God. These good gifts come down from the Creator of the sun, moon, and stars, who does not change like their shifting shadows. God decided to give us life through the word of truth so we might be the most important of all the things he made.

### **Meditation**

Many of us blamed God for our problems. Here in this passage from James, we see that God is not responsible for our temptations and sins. God is not responsible for our excessive drinking. We can't blame our spouse or our friends for our excessive drinking either. As stated by Dr. Bob in "Dr. Bob's Nightmare" on page 181 of the Big Book, "I used to get terribly upset when I saw my friends drink and knew I could not, but I schooled myself to believe that though I once had the same privilege, I had abused it so frightfully that it was withdrawn. So it doesn't behoove me to squawk about it, after all, nobody ever had to throw me down and pour liquor down my throat."

Others of us believed that God was punishing us for our waywardness. Some even believed that we had positioned ourselves beyond the reach of God's help. The fact of the matter is that God is there for us when we decide to turn to Him and ask Him for help. This is a guarantee that we can find in the ABC's of "How It Works" found on page 60 of the Big Book. Part (c) provides, "That God could and would [relieve us of our alcoholism] if He were sought."

Similarly, God is there to help us with all of our character defects and instances of temptation. In the Twelve by Twelve, there is a useful definition of sin – at least useful for alcoholics. Supplementing the discussion of Step Six ["Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character"] we can find the following on page 65, "Since most of us are born with an abundance of natural desires, it isn't strange that we often let these far exceed their intended purpose. When they drive us blindly, or we willfully demand that they supply us with more satisfactions or pleasures than are possible or due us, that is the point at which we depart from the degree of perfection that God wishes for us here on earth. That is the measure of our character defects, or, if you wish, of our sins."

By continuing to work the steps, in particular Steps Six and Seven, we are able to whittle down our propensity to sin. It isn't an overnight process, but it is definitely possible for us to improve our situation. Fundamentally, as pointed out by James, we need to stop blaming God and start recognizing Him as our forgiving parent. With God as our ally and source of strength, we can prevail against "temptation" and move further along our spiritual path.

### **Prayer**

God, when temptation comes, help me to recognize it quickly as such, and help me to look to You for strength to overcome it. With Your help, I can prevail against temptation and sin.

# Looking In The Mirror

*Luke 11:34-36*

[Jesus continued on, saying] “Your eye is a lamp for your body. A pure eye lets sunshine into your soul. But an evil eye shuts out the light and plunges you into darkness. Make sure that the light you think you have is not really darkness. If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight is shining on you.”

## **Meditation**

Recovering alcoholics frequently talk about being able to “look in the mirror.” They say that when drinking they were unable to look themselves in the mirror; but that, by working the steps, they have become able to see themselves in the mirror. They can now look themselves “in the eye.” They are now able to accept who they are and they are happy with their lives. The eye has been described as the “window to the soul.” The words of Jesus found in this passage from Luke endorse this comparison. Let’s take a closer look at the process through which an alcoholic becomes able to look in the mirror. Through Step Four, the alcoholic creates a personal inventory. In Step Five, that inventory is shared with God and with another human being. In discussing the fifth step, it states on page 75 of the Big Book, “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 are not done! We want to keep this new light. How then do we protect this new light that we have created within us? We proceed to Steps Six and Seven which are discussed on page 76 of the Big Book, “... we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now willing to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all – every one? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.”

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.”

## **Prayer**

God, help me always realize that the eye is the lamp of my body. Through working the steps in A.A., I can bring light to my eye, not darkness. By continuing to work the steps, I can maintain that light. With your help, I can do this.



# Striving for Humility

*Philippians 2:3-11, New Century Version*

**W**hen you do things, do not let selfishness or pride be your guide. Instead, be humble and give more honor to others than to yourselves. Do not be interested only in your own life, but be interested in the lives of others. In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus.

Christ himself was like God in everything.

But he did not think that being equal with God was something to be used for his own benefit.

But he gave us his place with God and made himself nothing.

He was born to be a man and became like a servant.

And when he was living as a man,

he humbled himself and was fully obedient to God,  
even when that caused his death – death on a cross.

So God raised him to the highest place.

God made his name greater than every other name

So that every knee will bow to the name of Jesus  
everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth.

And everyone will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord  
and bring glory to God the Father.

## **Meditation**

Jesus set the perfect example of humility in his life here on earth. Verses 6-11 of this passage are thought to come from a hymn of praise used by early Christians to recognize Jesus' humble qualities. Paul's words encourage us to follow in Jesus' path. We may feel discouraged because we are far from being perfect like Jesus. Still, it is never too late to start on the path to a better life, a life closer to God. Fortunately we have been given some help.

Lack of humility keeps us separated from God. Through the A.A. Program, we can learn how to see ourselves as we really are. Steps Six and Seven are crucial in dealing with our defects of character, defects which most of us blindly ignored while drinking. Even in early sobriety, we may have overlooked many defects. But, true contentment and serenity can only come after we have worked on our defects. On page 74 of the Twelve by Twelve, it states, "But when we have taken a square look at some of these defects, have discussed them with another, and have become willing to have them removed, our thinking about humility commences to have a wider meaning. By this time in all probability we have gained some measure of release from our more devastating handicaps. We enjoy moments in which there is something like real peace of mind." Further on down on page 74 and continuing on to page 75, we read, "This improved perception of humility starts another revolutionary change in our outlook. Our eyes begin to open to the immense values which have come straight out of painful ego-puncturing. Until now, our lives have been largely devoted to running from pain and problems... Escape via the bottle was always our solution. Character-building through suffering might be all right for saints, but it certainly didn't appeal to us. Then, in A.A., we looked and listened. Everywhere we saw failure and mis-

ery transformed by humility into priceless assets. We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness.”

### **Prayer**

God, help me to follow Jesus’ example in developing humility in my life.

## Step Eight.

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

**and**

## Step Nine.

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

## Making Amends

*Matthew 5:23-24, New Century Version*

[Jesus continued on, saying,] “So when you offer your gift to God at the altar, and you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there at the altar. Go and make peace with that person, and then come and offer your gift.”

### **Meditation**

It is important for us to clear away the wreckage of our past. Our key to continued sobriety is laying the things behind us that need to be laid behind us. Frequently new members of A.A. eventually find that they cannot stay sober. They “slip.” Although it is not possible to diagnose the cause of all slips, we have learned that many times those who slip have not been able to work the steps thoroughly. They have not been able to make the fourth step inventory and then take a fifth step. In fact, we are told on pages 72-73 of the Big Book, “We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person, when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: 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 have never completed their house-cleaning. 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.”

This passage from the Big Book deals with Step Five, a necessary predicate to the business of making amends which is the subject of Steps Eight and Nine. In the scripture passage above, Jesus also emphasizes the importance of making amends in the scripture passage above. Clearly our line of communication with God is much clearer when we have made the amends which we need to make.

Why do we need to square things away? It seems that if we don't put our thoughts and words into action, we are prone to fall back into alcoholic thinking which is full of denial. As stated on page 79 of the Twelve by Twelve, in connection with Step Eight, for some of us, “We clung to the claim that when drinking we never hurt anybody but ourselves... This attitude, of course, is the end result of purposeful forgetting. It is an attitude which can only be changed by a deep and honest search of our motives and actions.”

With God's help and with the help of good A.A. friends, we are able to undertake this business of making peace with those who “have something against us.” Jesus stressed the importance of this in His words. Experienced members of A.A. have also found the same truth in these words through working the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

God, help me to always remember the importance of making peace with those whom I have offended or trespassed against. Help me also to remember to be willing to seek help from my A.A. friends when I find this task difficult. There is a way to do this and I can do it.

## **Making Peace with Enemies**

*Proverbs 16:10*

When the ways of people please the Lord, he makes even their enemies live at peace with them.

### **Meditation**

When we make the transition from active alcoholism to sobriety, we find that we are apt to start having more friends and less enemies. Through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, we learn how to live with people. But, we still find it necessary to deal with our former enemies. Through Steps Eight and Nine, we go about the amends making process. We are told on page 79 of the Big Book, “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 must not shrink at anything.” There are two stories related about men who made amends on pages 79-80 of the

Big Book. In each case, the man faced adverse consequences, yet each went about the process and found that the words of the Proverb set forth above came true – their enemies came to live at peace with each. The first story is of the man who owed his ex-wife alimony and was facing jail. The situation is explained on page 79, “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.”

The second story is found on page 80, “This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated 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.”

### **Prayer**

God, I truly want to live at peace with all people. Help me to make peace all those who would be considered my enemies.

## **The Promises Attained During Amends Making Process**

*Luke 19:1-9*

**J**esus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree beside the road, so he could watch from there. When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the crowds were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled. Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have overcharged people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as

much!” Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham. And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost.”

### **Meditation**

Steps Eight and Nine of the A.A. Program deal with making amends. In Step Eight we make a list and become willing to make amends. In Step Nine we make direct amends wherever possible.

In this passage from Luke, we find the tax collector Zacchaeus publicly announcing that if he has overcharged anyone on their taxes he will return four times as much money as may have been overcharged. This brings a wonderful response from Jesus in which he recognizes this tax collector as a true son of Abraham and that salvation has come to him. Shortly after Zacchaeus’ makes amends, he is assured of salvation.

According to the Big Book, we too begin seeing the promises during our process of making amends. The promises are found on pages 83-84 of the Big Book which tells us, “If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through [our 9th step amends]. 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 cannot do for ourselves.”

Can we truly reach these promises during our lifetime here on earth? Through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, these promises are indeed attainable. Picking up in the middle of page 84, “Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will materialize if we work for them.”

### **Prayer**

Jesus, your promise of salvation to the tax collector Zaccheus gives hope and encouragement to me. May I always stand ready to make direct amends wherever possible.

# Step Ten.

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

## Living in Today

*James 4:13-16*

**L**ook here, you people who say, “Today or tomorrow we are going to a certain town and will stay there a year. We will do business there and make a profit.” How do you know what will happen tomorrow? For your life is like the morning fog – it’s here a little while, then it’s gone. What you ought to say is, “If the Lord wants us to, we will live and do this or that.” Otherwise you will be boasting about your own plans, and all such boasting is evil.

### **Meditation**

Recovering alcoholics are familiar with the 24 hour plan, which teaches us that when confronting the urge to drink we should strive to stay sober just for today. We can drink tomorrow if we want to, but we will decide that tomorrow. In the meantime, we commit to staying sober today, this 24 hour period in which we presently find ourselves.

The matter of living in today is slightly different, but related to the 24 hour plan. Sometimes, alcoholics tend to dwell on the past, particularly past mistakes and past hurts inflicted on them. We have learned, over and over again, that we need to live in today. To do otherwise is simply a waste time and energy. It is suggested to us that an evening review of each day’s activities is beneficial because we can learn how to improve, but we are specifically urged not to drift into regrets of the past. On page 86 of the Big Book, it states, “When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? ... But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.”

Similar to the problem of living in the past is the problem of worrying about the future. Something in the nature of many alcoholics causes them to get all caught up with things that need to be done in the future or things that will happen in the future. A good approach to living in today can be found in the story, “It Might Have Been Worse” on page 382 of the 3rd Edition of the Big Book, “Today is the day. Doing our best, living each day to the fullest is the art of living. Yesterday is gone, and we don’t know whether we will be here tomorrow. If we do a good job of living today, and if tomorrow comes for us, then the chances are we will do a good job when it arrives – so why worry about it?”

The suggestion of James in the scripture quoted above is perfect for alcoholics in recovery. James asks us how we even know what will happen tomorrow. All of our thoughts about tomorrow should be couched in terms of God’s will. If it is God’s

will for us to be here tomorrow, then God will provide guidance to us as to what we should do.

There is a beautiful passage about living in today which can be found in the story “Promoted to Chronic.” On page 473 of the third edition of the Big Book, the author tells us, “I realize that all I’m guaranteed in life is today. The poorest person has no less and the wealthiest has no more – each of us but one day. What we do with it is our own business; how we use it is up to us individually.”

### **Prayer**

God, help me to appreciate your gift of today. Today, I have the opportunity to put myself in service of you and my fellows. Help me to maximize my opportunity by keeping my focus on today and not worrying about yesterday or tomorrow.

## **Man’s Tongue**

*James 1:19-21, 26 and James 3:3-10, Holman Christian Standard Bible*

[From James 1:] My dearly loved brothers, understand this: everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for man’s anger does not accomplish God’s righteousness. Therefore, ridding yourselves of all moral filth and evil excess, humbly receive the implanted word, which is able to save you.\*\*\* If anyone thinks he is religious, without controlling his tongue but deceiving his heart, his religion is useless.

[From James 3:] Now when we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we also guide the whole animal. And consider ships: though very large and driven by fierce winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So too, though the tongue is a small part of the body, it boasts great things. Consider how large a forest a small fire ignites. And the tongue is a fire. The tongue, a world of unrighteousness, is placed among the parts of our bodies; it pollutes the whole body, sets the course of life on fire, and is set on fire by hell. For every creature--animal or bird, reptile or fish—is tamed and has been tamed by man, but no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who are made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things should not be this way.

### **Meditation**

We alcoholics are given specific instructions on this vital topic on page 91 of the Twelve by Twelve, “One unkind tirade or one willful snap judgment can ruin our relation with another person for a whole day, or maybe a whole year. Nothing pays off like restraint of tongue and pen. We must avoid quick-tempered criticism and furious, power-driven argument.” Why do we have such a tendency to misuse our gift of speech? A partial explanation can be found further along in the Twelve by Twelve in this chapter which discusses Step Ten, “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.” At page 94 it states, “We ‘constructively criticized’ someone who needed it, when our real motive was to win a useless ar-

gument. Or, the person concerned not being present, we thought we were helping others to understand him, when in actuality our true motive was to feel superior by pulling him down. We sometimes hurt those we love because they need to be ‘taught a lesson,’ when we really want to punish. We were depressed and complained when we felt bad, when in fact we were mainly asking for sympathy and attention. This odd trait of mind and emotion, this perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one, permeates human affairs from top to bottom. This subtle and elusive kind of self-righteousness can underlie the smallest act or thought. Learning daily to spot, admit, and correct these flaws is the essence of character-building and good living.” We have learned that it is helpful to pause before we speak and to really think about what we want to say and why we want to say it. We sincerely attempt to find the true motive for our intended words. If it is a good one, then we have a green light to speak. If we are uncomfortable about what may be our true motive, then perhaps we should wait and consider remaining silent or finding other words which would have little chance of being misconstrued or being received in a hurtful way.

### **Prayer**

God, I pray I am able to control my tongue today and every day. There is much bad and much good that can result from my words. Please help me use my speech only in a loving way.

## Step Eleven.

**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.**

### **Our Daily Walk**

*2 Corinthians 5:7, New American Standard*

– for we walk by faith, not by sight –

### **Meditation**

Just exactly how do we go about our daily life on the basis of faith? On the basis of living according to God’s plan for us? For most of us alcoholics, our lives while drinking had been lives of reaction. We frequently said and did things spontaneously with little or no thought. We lived our feelings. There is a tendency to bring this sort of behavior



into sobriety with us. But, with help from the A.A. Program and guidance by fellow alcoholics in recovery, we have learned to slow down the process.

The eleventh step states, "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." How do we carry this out on a daily basis? We have guidance on page 86, where we are told, "Before we begin [our day], we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives... In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We 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."

We don't get it right all the time. But as time goes by, we should get better at the process. "What used to be the hunch or 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 might 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 place of inspiration." This is from page 87 of the Big Book.

It is amazing how much closer we get to God's will when we eliminate self from the picture. When selfish motives and desires are removed, we are indeed much more apt to do God's will. The Big Book further instructs on page 87, "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..."

### **Prayer**

Oh God, it is my desire to walk by faith and not by earthly sight or sound. Help me to do your will today.

## **Listening for God's Gentle Whisper**

*1 Kings 19:11-13*

**G**o out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

### **Meditation**

God is gentle and comes to us in quiet ways. He is not found in our hectic activities. He is found in the recesses of our heart. For the prophet Elijah, he was not found in

the mighty windstorm, not in the earthquake, nor in the fire. God's voice was there as a gentle whisper in silence following these rather significant events.

We do not hear God in audible terms. But, we do have the opportunity to find God and learn God's will for us. We do this through by making a decision to turn our will and lives over to the care of God in Step Three and by prayer and meditation as suggested in Step Eleven. The key is to get our own will out of the way. On page 40 of the Twelve by Twelve it states, "It is when we try to make our will conform with God's that we begin to use it rightly. To all of us, this was a most wonderful revelation. Our whole trouble had been the misuse of willpower. We had tried to bombard our problems with it instead of attempting to bring it into agreement with God's intention for us."

Ascertaining God's will for us can be tricky. With time and practice, we learn how. It sometimes happens, however, that we mistake God's will for us in our own designs. We don't wait for that silent gentle whisper, but instead prevent that from happening. On page 60 of the Twelve by Twelve it states, "How many times have we heard well-intentioned people claim the guidance of God when it was all too plain that they were sorely mistaken. Lacking both practice and humility, they had deluded themselves and were able to justify the most arrant nonsense on the ground that this was what God had told them. It is worth noting that people of very high spiritual development almost always insist on checking with friends or spiritual advisers the guidance they feel they have received from God."

The advice of the Big Book itself in connection with Step Eleven is found on pages 86-87, "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."

### **Prayer**

God, I pray that, like the prophet Elijah, I be given the strength and patience to wait through the storms and earthquakes in my life to hear your gentle whisper. Thy will, not mine, be done.

# Step Twelve.

**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.**

## Freely Have You Received, Freely Give

*Matthew 10:8, 12-13, The Douay Rheims Bible*

**J**esus sent out his twelve disciples, telling them,] "... Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely have you received, freely give... And when you come into the house, salute it, saying: Peace be to this house. And if that house be worthy, your peace shall come upon it; but if it be not worthy, your peace shall return to you."

### **Meditation**

Alcoholics in recovery are frequently heard to say, "You have to give it away in order to keep it." An essential element in the A.A. Program is Step Twelve which tells us, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics..." This theme is echoed in Tradition Five which states, "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Life for an alcoholic is exactly as Jesus described to his disciples in verse 8 above – we have been restored to health and sanity "freely" and we are called to "freely" give this solution to others. We are told on page 89 of the Big Book, "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail... Frequent contact with others and with each other is the bright spot of our lives."

Jesus' words in verses 12-13 also describe the importance of carrying the message, even if the message seemingly falls on deaf ears. By trying to help others, we are guaranteeing our own sobriety. Our effort to bestow peace and blessings upon others always rebounds to us, even when the person we are trying to help isn't interested in help. Alcoholics in recovery have been heard to describe a twelfth step call which seems to fail as follows: "I tried to help this fellow get sober and he wasn't interested, but it sure helped me." Among other things, the recovered alcoholic is reminded of how life used to be. And, just as importantly, the effort to help may actually become a seed that is planted in the mind of the person who needs help – a seed that may grow and eventually lead the person to recovery. We are told on page 90 of the Big Book, "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." We are also told on page 94, "It is important for him to realize that your attempt to pass this on to him plays a vital part in your own recovery. Actually, he may be helping you more than you are helping him."

Another description of this twelfth step phenomenon is found on pages 85-86 of the book, "Living Sober" where it states, "No matter which type [of alcoholic] we were, we realize now that we were excessively self-centered, chiefly concerned about our feelings, our problems, other people's reaction to us, and our own past and future. Therefore, trying to get into communication with and to help other people is a recovery measure for us, because it helps us out of ourselves. Trying to heal ourselves by helping others works, even when it is an insincere gesture."

### **Prayer**

Jesus, help me never forget that I have been given so much freely. And, help me to always seek to help others by freely giving to them.

## **Much Is Required from Those to Whom Much Is Given**

*Luke 12:48*

[Jesus continued on, saying] "...Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given."

### **Meditation**

An essential part of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is the requirement that we must work with other alcoholics in order to stay sober. Step Twelve states, "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." We are not supposed to stay in our homes and simply expect God's grace to continue to flow into our lives. We must work to keep God's wonderful miracle for us flowing. The words of Jesus, "Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given," should have much meaning for those of us in recovery. We have been given a new life of sobriety and we should, therefore, recognize our continuing obligation to pass this on to others. We have been given much and we should understand that God expects us to do much in return. This indeed, will insure the continuing presence of God's grace, peace and love in our lives.

We can obtain a glimpse into the very early twelfth step efforts by those in the program by looking at the story "The Keys to the Kingdom." In this story, the author tells us on page 310 of the third edition to the Big Book, "So I went to Akron, and also to Cleveland, and I met more recovered alcoholics. I saw in these people a quality of peace and serenity that I knew I must have for myself. Not only were they at peace with themselves, but they were getting a kick out of life such as one seldom encounters, except in the very young. They seemed to have all the ingredients for successful living. Philosophy, faith, a sense of humor (they could laugh at themselves), clear-cut objectives, appreciation – most especially appreciation and a sympathetic understanding for their fellow man. Nothing in their lives took precedence over their response to a call for help from some alcoholic in need. They would travel miles and stay up all night with someone they had never laid eyes on before and think nothing of

it. Far from expecting praise for their deeds, they claimed the performance a privilege and insisted that they invariably received more than they gave. Extraordinary people!” Are we living up to the example set by our predecessors? Things are, of course, different today and the opportunity for pure twelfth step work (as described above) has frequently been preempted by other avenues which are now up and running – such as court-ordered attendance at meetings, interventions, and even television commercials which are sponsored by treatment centers. Still, we have an obligation to carry the message. And we can do this by going to meetings and working with those who are in attendance.

### **Prayer**

Jesus, I pray that I always remember your words which tell us that much will be expected from those who are given much. Indeed, I have been given much. I pray for the strength, wisdom, and perseverance needed to continue to carry the message to others.

*Author Roger Baron lives in Vermillion, South Dakota, where he teaches at the University of South Dakota. He has been sober since attending his first A.A. meeting in September, 1993. He describes his path to recovery with the acknowledgement, “I thank God for leading me to A.A. and I thank A.A. for leading me back to God.”*

*To subscribe for more daily meditations, e-mail Roger.Baron@usd.edu with “join A.A. Bible” in the subject line.*

*Editor Rev. Cynthia Sloan is SPSARV (United Methodist Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence) program associate and licensed clinical addiction specialist.*

*Connect with the 20-year old substance abuse ministry of SPSARV for more inspiration at: <http://www.umspсарv.org/>.*