

The Stratford Men's

STEP
WORKGROUP
GUIDE

Big Book Format
(last revised – August 6, 2021)

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.

(Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 85)

To ensure that you have the most recent version, please go to www.stratfordmens.org – where, on the left-hand side of the home page, you will find a ‘hotlink’ for downloading the most recent version of this Guide.

We are constantly trying to improve this Step Workgroup Guide with updates and revisions. If you have any suggestions for changes or additions to the Guide, please email them to admin@stratfordmens.org.

PREFACE

THE EVOLUTION OF THE *STEP WORK GROUP GUIDE*

(January 2003 to August 2021)

In 1988, one of my sponsees, Leonard F., was transferred to Dallas, Texas where he continued to work diligently on his sobriety in local A.A. meetings. Len was just 11 months sober when he left and we stayed in touch over the years, talking on the phone occasionally and meeting on those rare occasions when we found ourselves in the same state at the same time.

Around that time, a local A.A. woman, Jennifer W., moved to Texas where she spent several years before returning to Connecticut and, on her return, asked my wife, the Lady Sara, to be her sponsor.

Both Jen and Len occasionally talked about these small groups that got together in Texas for a limited time and with the express purpose of actually *doing* the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous together (except for the 5th Step which was still to be done with a sponsor).

Sometime in late 2002, I decided that I wanted to try organizing a Step Work Group here in Connecticut and I asked Len to send me a copy of the format used by the groups he knew about and Sara asked Jen if one of her friends in Texas would forward us the outline of how their meetings were organized and the format they followed each week.

Soon, we had these two Texas outlines for Step Work Groups in hand, one of which was six pages long and the other eight pages.

My background includes the frequent creation of agendas for business meetings and, with that experience, I set out to blend the two Texas outlines into one document which necessitated, among other things, editing out a number of specific ‘Jesus references’ from one of them.

I prepared a format for the first couple of meetings and convinced eight of my A.A. friends (King D., Stuart W., Charles D., JD S., Bobby K., Tom W., Chris S. and Tom F.) to join me in giving this new concept a try. We held the first meeting at my house in January of 2003 and were quite frankly amazed at how interesting and productive these meetings were from the very start.

I had taken some creative liberties while blending the Texas documents, but had preserved the long list of “talking points” that were suggested for discussion at each meeting and, each week, I would hand out the sheets for the next week’s meeting. The first major ‘working’ change to the format happened when my sponsor, King D., came to the third meeting having dutifully done the required readings and then actually written out his answers for each of the suggested “talking points” for that meeting.

This was clearly such an excellent way to prepare for the meeting, that the following week, I moved all the “talking points” from the “meeting” section into the “homework” section (which, up until then, had been exclusively devoted to readings). I did this for each subsequent meeting – right up until the Fifth Step meeting where the “talking points” completely disappeared from both Texas formats.

Our first group took 20 weeks to go through the Twelve Steps and by the end of those sessions, the *Step Work Group Guide* – with the help and suggestions of the participants – had grown to 36 pages. By then, it was also

clear to me and to the other members of the group that this was one of the most beneficial exercises we had ever done during our time in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Personally, I told people that it was the most important and impactful thing I had done for my sobriety since I had quit drinking – more than 20 years before.

Immediately after the completion of that first group, my Lady Sara took the 36-page document and formed a women's group, taking 20 weeks to go through all of the Steps. They too made suggestions for changes, most of them coming from Sara, Mary Lynn F, Katie W. and Kathy O'S. Simultaneously, Bobby K. had found the first group so helpful that he immediately put together another group and began going through the Steps with them – again, making suggestions for changes to the format as they went along.

But the next big suggestion came a year or two later from Greg W. during the second men's Step Work Group held at my house. Greg lamented that there was no more written homework after the Fifth Step (as mentioned earlier, there were no "talking points" beyond this in the Texas materials which I had started with) and noted that he missed the discipline it brought to the weekly exercises. That was such a valid criticism, I immediately started to scour the Big Book for references and instructions regarding the other Steps, formulating homework questions to reflect what was in the book and what needed to be done.

Over and above these, the most important ongoing contributions to the *Guide*, were the suggestions (perhaps "proddings" would be a better word) from my friend, Stuart W., who insisted that each question had to be easily understandable and accurately reflect what was actually written in the Big Book. Stuart, who has participated in a number of these Step Work Groups over the past 17 years, makes constant suggestions for changes, additions or deletions which we would then argue about before any changes were (or weren't) made. While I have been the writer of this *Step Work Group Guide*, Stuart has been my most helpful editor and his fingerprints can be found on many pages of the final document – which is currently 124 pages long.

Early on, there were complaints that 20 weeks was just too long, so I revised the *Guide* down to 15 weeks, but people reported that this didn't allow them enough time to do real justice to each Step. Given that, I then created a 17-week *Guide*, but again there were complaints of not enough time. That led, finally, to the current 18-week format, which we have been using for the past twelve or thirteen years and which, based on the feedback we have consistently received, people seem to feel is just right.

Most of the 150+ men in my Monday night meeting in Stratford have participated in one – and frequently more than one – of these Step Work Group, often making helpful suggestions for changes. The most common of these were along the lines of "this question confused us" (a mandatory rewrite) and "how come you didn't have a homework question about this important passage in the Big Book?" (possible rewrite).

Then, as word of the *Step Work Group Guide* (and its availability on our website) spread, the *Step work Group Guide* started to be used in other areas of the country and, I must admit, it is very gratifying to receive suggestions and critiques from people as far away as California for our *Guide* – all of which are given careful consideration and are frequently implemented.

THANKS TO ALL!

"Old Bill" S.

Monday Night Stratford Men's Group
Stratford, CT

INTRODUCTION

The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, contains a detailed account of how the authors recovered from alcoholism. The essential foundations of that recovery can be described in two basic premises – the necessity of having a vital spiritual experience as a defense against the first drink and the ongoing need to work with other alcoholics to maintain that defense.

The authors of the Big Book summarized their own vital spiritual experience in the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous – found on pages 59-60 of our Book. In addition, the entire front portion of the Big Book – from page xxv through page 164 – contains concrete and specific details on how the original members of AA understood the Steps, how they went about working each of the Steps and what they did to incorporate the Twelve Steps into their lives.

This Guide presents detailed instructions for organizing and running a 12-Step Workgroup based on the guidelines and suggestions found in the Big Book. It attempts to organize those guidelines and suggestions into eighteen comprehensive and manageable segments for use by a small group of recovering alcoholics.

The Guide is written for a Step ‘Work’ Group, not a Step ‘Study’ Group. During the meetings, the group will certainly study and talk about the Steps but the real purpose of the group is to help each individual member put that study and talk into action. The Big Book famously counsels:

“The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 83)

Based on this strong admonition, this Guide attempts to clarify the “theory” of the spiritual life and to highlight and suggest ways for actually making the Steps – our “spiritual program of action” (p. 85) – a reality in our day-to-day lives.

The format of this Guide was adopted in the belief that it is essential for each recovering alcoholic to take the Twelve Steps as completely and as thoroughly as possible and that one of the best ways to do this is to take the Steps in the way that most closely resembles what worked for our founding members. The exercises in this Guide are designed to help Group members “trace exactly the same path to recovery that was blazed by the earliest members of Alcoholics Anonymous” (p. xxii).

Working the Steps alone may be fine. Doing them with another alcoholic is even better. But working the Steps with a group can be a powerful and life-transforming experience. Group discussion will surely increase your understanding of what is required by each Step and the group will provide tremendous support and encouragement for carrying out the often difficult actions that the Twelve Steps require.

This Guide is not meant to re-write our book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, or to modify, in any way, the information and directions that are found there. If you find anything here that you think is contrary to what is written in the Big Book, please let us know immediately. If, on the other hand, you think that this Guide has left out some important elements that are found in the Big Book, we would very much like to hear from you.

This Step Workgroup Guide is ‘a work in progress’ and we actively welcome your suggestions for improvements. After conducting your own Step Workgroup, we encourage you to send us your comments or proposed changes for this Guide (see page 108 of this Guide for details).

Please send all correspondence regarding this Guide to admin@stratfordmens.org.

ORGANIZING A GROUP

RECRUITING GROUP MEMBERS: If you have never done a Step Workgroup in your area before, finding ten people willing to make the commitment may prove challenging. But, if AA's in your area have done even one of these Workgroups in the recent past, you will most likely find it relatively easy to enlist ten new members. It has been our experience that people who finish this 18-week commitment always give it "rave reviews."

Whatever the degree of difficulty in organizing a Step Workgroup, it is critical that you make sure everyone who is invited to join the Workgroup is clearly aware of how much work and dedication is involved in this 18-week commitment. If you haven't done one of these Step Workgroups before, we should warn you, **IT'S A LOT OF COMMITMENT AND EVEN MORE HARD WORK!** It is also critical to point out that each group member must be able to honestly make the six commitments outlined in the "Business" section of the first meeting (see page 4).

IT IS RECOMMENDED that the organizer of the first meeting print up ten or more sets of pages 1 through 13 of this Guide and give them to prospective members.

Giving prospects these thirteen pages will provide them with the important facts they need to know about the Step Workgroup, allow them sufficient time to consider the degree of commitment and work required and, if they decide to join, tell them what readings they need to do in preparation for the first meeting.

Again, when distributing these first thirteen pages, please do not be bashful about how much commitment and work this Step Workgroup is going to be. You can't say this too often – "it's a LOT of commitment and EVEN MORE hard work." (And the rewards are even greater.)

PRINTING THE WORK BOOKS: If you are organizing a Step Workgroup, either print out this PDF file and, using the instructions below, take that copy to a local printer OR just give your printer the pdf file and print up a sufficient number of Step Workgroup Guides for everyone in your proposed group. Members should be charged the per-copy cost of this printing when they are distributed at the first meeting.

To Print the Step Workgroup Guide Books:

- Ask the printer to separate out the front cover as a single sheet and then print all the of rest of the pages as double-sided.
- Have the book "coil" bound (sometimes called "wire" bound) with an acetate cover in front and black cardstock on the back

(Note: this type of binding will add almost 50% to the price of each book but we feel that the coil binding is more than worth the added cost – because of the ease of use it provides when writing out homework assignments in the book.)

MEETING #1 – Organization & Commitments

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #1

- ❖ **GROUP MEMBERS WILL REVIEW** pages 1 through 13 of this Workgroup Guide.
- ❖ **ALSO READ** the “Preface” and the four “Forewords” in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
 - **NOTE:** All page numbers in this Guide refer to the 4th edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published in 2001. If you are using a 3rd edition copy, the page references for “The Doctor’s Opinion” will be “off” by two roman numerals because the 4th edition has added a new “Foreword” that is two-pages long. Similarly, the page numbers for “Appendix II: Spiritual Experience” are different in the 3rd edition because the “Personal Stories” that make up the second half of the Book have been changed.
 - **WORKBOOKS:** The organizer of the Workgroup will have a sufficient number of copies of this Guide printed and bound and offer them to group members at cost during this first meeting. (For details on how to do this, see page 2 of this Guide.)

Meeting #1 DISCUSSION: How the Group Works

- ❖ **READ AND DISCUSS the SUGGESTED PLAN** for the Step Workgroup (as outlined below) and then call for a group conscience on how your Step Workgroup meetings will be organized and operated.
 - To form a group of **NO MORE THAN TEN PEOPLE**. (NOTE: It is strongly suggested that the groups NOT be co-ed because of 4th Step issues.)
 - The group will then hold an initial meeting to **AGREE ON A TIME AND PLACE** for all subsequent meetings and for the length of the meeting (usually 90 minutes).
 - Be sure to **CHECK THE CALENDAR** when selecting your dates to avoid (or to compensate for) any holidays and other significant events in group member’s lives. (Note: the group as a whole can decide to skip certain “problem” dates such as national holidays or days when several members won’t be able to attend.)
 - Each group should decide **HOW THE MEETINGS WILL BE OPENED AND CLOSED**. Some use the AA preamble and the prayers that are common in their area for opening and closing meetings. Others avoid these as being “too much like the regular AA meeting format” and improvise other ways of opening and closing the Step Workgroup meetings.
 - Most groups **ROTATE THE CHAIRPERSON** from week to week.
 - Each member **COMMITTS TO COME TO THE MEETING HAVING READ AND STUDIED** those portions of the Big Book which relate to the Step under consideration and having completed the written homework as outlined in the HOMEWORK section that precedes each meeting. (Preferably, this work will *not* be done in a rush the night before or on the day of the meeting.)
 - **READING THE BIG BOOK IS CENTRAL** to this process of working the Steps. This reading necessarily comes before the writing. Read carefully and critically. If the definition of any word is not clear, please look it up in a dictionary. Any questions about the readings should be discussed with members of this group or with your sponsor.

Meeting #1 - Discussion

- Group members must **COMPLETE EACH WRITING ASSIGNMENT**. Taking the Steps involves writing. Writing helps to organize your thoughts. It is amazing what previously unknown facts just “show up” when you write them down on paper.
- After the initial meeting, **NO ONE WILL BE ADDED TO THIS GROUP**. If someone has a slip or is not living up their commitments to the group, the group members must decide if it is in the best interest of the group to allow them to continue with the group.
- It is critical that everyone who attends these Step Workgroup meetings **BE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE MEETINGS** – in short, EVERYBODY must get a chance to talk.
- This is an **18-WEEK COMMITMENT**. After completing the Steps, the group will **DISBAND**.

❖ BUSINESS – AT THE INTIAL MEETING:

- **IT IS CRITICAL** that the following **SIX COMMITMENTS** be carefully reviewed, thoroughly understood and sincerely accepted by all group members. *At this first meeting, we usually ask each group member to individually and publicly state their agreement to these six commitments.*

THE SIX COMMITMENTS:

- **COMMIT** to do the reading and the writing for the Work Group every week (*even if you have to miss the meeting*).
- **COMMIT** to do the Steps as outlined in the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
- **COMMIT** to stay with the group through all eighteen meetings.
- **COMMIT** to making telephone or personal contact with one or more members of the group during each week that the Steps are being taken – sharing your problems or experience with the homework assignment for that week.
- **COMMIT** to attend each meeting except for RARE and EXTREMELY UNUSUAL circumstances. (If a member cannot be present, another member should be called and advised of the problem so that the group is informed about your absence. It should be understood that everyone will probably have one or two absences and that perfect attendance is not *absolutely* required.)
- **COMMIT** to respect the confidentiality of each group member: “What you hear here, stays here!”
- **EXCHANGE** phone numbers and addresses. (Some groups also exchange email addresses.)

❖ DISCUSSION – AT THE INITIAL MEETING, all group members will then discuss the “Preface” and the four “Forewords” to the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. An open discussion of the “Preface” and the “Forewords” should touch on the following:

- The statement (and the *italics*) in the “Foreword” to the First Edition that “the main purpose of this book” is to “show other alcoholics *precisely how we have recovered*” from alcoholism.”
- For clarity’s sake, this statement should be compared to the language used on page 29 at the end of Chapter Two where it states: “Further on, clear cut directions are given showing how we recovered.”

DISCUSS the early history of AA as outlined in the “Foreword” to the Second Edition.

DISCUSS the two key elements “vital to permanent recovery” that are mentioned in relation to the story about the physician at the bottom of page xvi and the top of page xvii.

DISCUSS the introduction of the Twelve Traditions as mentioned on page xix.

REVIEW the homework assignment for Meeting #2.

❖ **READ ALOUD:**

The following are the basic premises of the AA program which may not be so obvious on a ‘first reading’ of the Big Book, but they will hopefully become clear to you as the group progresses through the next seventeen weeks of homework and meetings:

1. **Once an alcoholic starts drinking, there is no stopping** (The Doctor’s Opinion and throughout the Big Book) but the REALLY perplexing question is: **Why do alcoholics start drinking in the first place** – when they have no alcohol in their body? (pp. 5-6, 22-25 and throughout the Big Book).
2. We are convinced that because of a **“peculiar mental twist”** (p. 33), **“we are without defense against the first drink”** (pp. 24, 43 and elsewhere) and it is **“the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking [that] obviously... is the crux of the problem”** (p. 35).
3. We can only call this peculiar mental twist, this defenselessness, this **“insidious insanity of that first drink”** (p. 8), **“plain insanity”** (p. 37) and admit that our behavior has **“been strangely insane”** (p. 38) when it comes to the first drink. For alcoholics, there is a **“subtle insanity which precedes the first drink”** (p. 40).
4. The only way we can be **restored to sanity** is by having a **“vital spiritual experience”** (p. 27), we must **“pursue the spiritual remedy”** (p. xvi), **“we must find a spiritual basis of life – or else”** (p. 44 and throughout the Big Book), **our “defense must come from a Higher Power”** (p. 43). [*NOTE that the 3rd and 11th Steps refer to this Higher Power as “God as we understood Him,” a concept more fully explained in Appendix II: Spiritual Experience (pp. 567-568).*]
5. **The Twelve Steps** outline how we have acquired this vital spiritual experience, this spiritual basis for our lives. The Twelve Steps represent **the “spiritual answer and program of action”** (p. 42) that has saved us.
6. Further, to preserve the ongoing effectiveness of this spiritual solution, it is **“imperative to work with others”** because **“faith without works is dead”** (p. 14) and **“When all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day”** (p. 15).
7. Finally, **“our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people around us”** (p. 77). The Big Book could not be clearer that having a “vital spiritual experience” results not only in the fact that we are able to stop drinking but also that we gradually turn away from selfishness and self-centeredness (“the root of our troubles” p. 62) and begin to focus our lives on the ways in which we can be **“useful to others”** (p.19 and more than seventy other places in the Big Book – see pages 109-111 of this Guide for a comprehensive list).

MEETING #2 – The First Step (The Doctor’s Opinion + Bill’s Story)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #2

- ❖ **READ** “The Doctor’s Opinion” (pp. xxv-xxxii) and “Bill’s Story” (pp. 1-16) in the Big Book.
- ❖ **UNDERLINE** or highlight what seems important to you.
- ❖ **CAREFULLY NOTE** the *italics* in the text (authors use italics to indicate greater importance).
- ❖ Having read these two chapters, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one.

PLEASE NOTE: *this Workbook provides some space for you to write your answers below the questions, but do not feel limited by the space provided. You can also write ON THE BLANK SIDE OPPOSITE EACH PAGE or even in a separate notebook.*

1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “powerless” and “unmanageable.”

“THE DOCTOR’S OPINION” presents a medical diagnosis of alcoholism and makes suggestions regarding the cure.

2. In their commentary on the letter, the authors of the Big Book almost casually mention that the alcoholic’s mind is “abnormal” (p. xxvi). What does this mean to you?

3. In their commentary on the Doctor’s letter, the authors of the Big Book say “any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete” (p. xxvi). How important do you think this factor is and why?

Meeting #2 - Homework

4. What is the best definition you can find of the word “allergy”? Is that what the doctor means when using that word and how does he think this “allergy” works in alcoholics? (pp. xxviii-xxx)

5. The doctor calls “alcoholics” people who are “restless, irritable and discontented” even before they drink (p. xxviii). Is this an accurate description of yourself before AA? If so, provide some examples. How about now?

6. The doctor claims that these feelings of being “restless, irritable and discontented” are relieved by “a few drinks” which produce a “sense of ease and comfort” (pp. xxviii-xxix). Does this pattern sound familiar to you? How did taking “a few drinks” affect you?

7. These few drinks then lead to the “phenomenon of craving” which leads to more drinking. This escalation is “beyond [the alcoholic’s] mental control” (pp. xxix-xxx). Can you identify with this pattern of drinking? How did it work in your experience?

8. The doctor says that “allergic types can never safely use alcohol in any form at all” (p. xxviii) and that “relief” is dependent on “entire abstinence” (p. xxx). Are you thoroughly convinced that total abstinence is the only solution to your drinking problem? If so, why do you now believe that you can’t take even ONE drink?

Meeting #2 - Homework

9. The doctor says that an “entire psychic change” must occur (p. xxix). What is a psychic change?

10. Why is “something more than human power... needed to produce the essential psychic change” (p. xxix)?

11. Although the doctor admits “the classification of alcoholics seems most difficult,” he then mentions five “types” of alcoholics. (p. xxx). What are they and where do you think you might fit into this outline?

12. Did you find anything in this chapter that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

[NOTE: this same question will recur in most weekly homework assignments. We know that some AA's do not feel it is appropriate to question the wisdom of the Big Book but we also know that unless people get a chance to openly state and discuss their disagreements with our basic text that those disagreements may well linger as “reservations” to the program and may eventually lead to the next drink. We therefore feel it is best to openly acknowledge these issues rather than to try to pretend that they do not exist.]

13. What was of particular significance to you in this chapter?

Meeting #2 - Homework

24. Did you find anything in this chapter that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

25. What was of particular significance to you in this week's readings?

26. List five ways in which you were powerless over alcohol.

27. What were the five worst things that you have done as a result of being powerless over alcohol?

[NOTE: These "five worst things" will only be shared at a group level if YOU decide that it is appropriate to do so. This list is primarily for YOU to get in touch with the problems and the evils that alcohol caused in your life.]

28. If you are still TRULY powerless over alcohol then that truth should result in several practical and concrete actions in your life. List five suggestions that you have followed since joining AA (for instance, gotten the booze out of the house, stayed out of bars, etc.) because you are powerless over alcohol.

Meeting #2 - Homework

29. Are there any practical and concrete suggestions for action that you have been given during your time in AA that you have NOT taken (for instance, getting the booze out of the house, staying out of bars, etc.)? If so, what are they?

30. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and Appendix II in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

(Because of the critical and central importance of this “awakening” for your recovery, you will be asked the following question at the end of each week’s homework. While it may be difficult to identify much spiritual progress in yourself this week, we are hoping that your answers will become more meaningful as each week goes by.)

Has this exercise on the 1st Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #2 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #2 - Discussion

The First Step (The Doctor's Opinion + Bill's Story)

STEP ONE: WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL – THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

DISCUSSION TEXTS: *The Doctor's Opinion* and *Bill's Story*.

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in reaction to last week's meeting. (approximately 10 minutes)
3. **DISCUSS** any of the first 24 numbered questions from last week's writing assignment that may have *caused you difficulty* or *raised questions in your mind*. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss ALL of these homework questions thoroughly. So, it is recommended that the group confine discussion to those questions that people had trouble with (or that they found particularly interesting) before moving on to questions 25-30. It is, however, important that everyone be given a chance to share on these questions during the meeting.]

DISCUSS with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to **questions 25, 26, 28, 29 & 30** from the homework assignment.

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the questions: “Did you find anything in these readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

Meeting #3 - Homework

14. Have you had an experience like Fred's (pp. 39-43) where you *knew* you weren't going to drink and then somehow found yourself drunk? If yes, what happened? How did you explain it to yourself at that time?

15. One more time, the text mentions that "at certain times" there is "no effective mental defense against the first drink" (p. 43). Does it really mean NONE? If so, why?

16. Did you find anything in this chapter that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

17. What was of particular significance to you in this chapter?

18. List any doubts that you might still have regarding your current powerlessness over alcohol. If you don't think you have any doubts, list at least three times in your recovery that you have acted as if you weren't powerless over alcohol.

19. Write down ten things that were unmanageable in your life when you were drinking. One sentence will be enough on each (for instance: "Fear of not having enough money"; "I was afraid of women"; "I couldn't make my relationship with my parents work like I wanted it to" etc.).

Meeting #3 - Homework

20. Although it's not in the Big Book, one possible way to get in touch with the influence of alcohol in your life is to take the 20 Question Test. How many of the following questions would you answer positively?

1. Did you lose time from work due to your drinking? [Circle one: YES / NO]
2. Did drinking make your home life unhappy? [YES / NO]
3. Did you drink because you were shy with other people? [YES / NO]
4. Did drinking affect your reputation? [YES / NO]
5. Did you ever feel remorse after drinking? [YES / NO]
6. Have you gotten into financial difficulties as a result of your drinking? [YES / NO]
7. Did you turn to lower companions and an inferior environment when drinking? [YES / NO]
8. Did your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare? [YES / NO]
9. Did your ambition decrease since drinking? [YES / NO]
10. Did you crave a drink at a definite time daily? [YES / NO]
11. Did you want a drink the next morning? [YES / NO]
12. Did drinking cause you to have difficulty sleeping? [YES / NO]
13. Did your efficiency decrease since drinking? [YES / NO]
14. Did drinking jeopardize your job or business? [YES / NO]
15. Did you drink to escape from worries or troubles? [YES / NO]
16. Did you drink alone? [YES / NO]
17. Did you ever have a complete loss of memory as a result of your drinking? [YES / NO]
18. Did your physician ever treat you for drinking? [YES / NO]
19. Did you drink to build up your self-confidence? [YES / NO]
20. Have you ever been in a hospital or institution on account of drinking? [YES / NO]

21. So... are you COMPLETELY convinced that you are "powerless over alcohol" and that your "lives had become unmanageable"? If not, what reservations do you still have?

22. The 12th Step says "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." and the Appendix in our Book on "Spiritual Experience" notes that "most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

Has this exercise on the 1st Step contributed to or helped you develop your 'spiritual awakening'?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #3 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #3 - Discussion

The First Step (There is a Solution + More about Alcoholism)

STEP ONE: WE ADMITTED WE WERE POWERLESS OVER ALCOHOL – THAT OUR LIVES HAD BECOME UNMANAGEABLE.

DISCUSSION TEXTS: *There is a Solution* and *More About Alcoholism*

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in reaction to last week's meeting. (approximately 10 minutes)
3. **DISCUSS** any of the first 16 numbered questions from last week's writing assignment that may have caused you difficulty or raised questions in your mind. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with (or that they found particularly interesting) before moving on to questions 18 through 22.]

DISCUSS with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to **questions 17 through 22** from the homework assignment.

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the questions: "Did you find anything in these readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?"

4. **FINAL DISCUSSION:** Having carefully examined and discussed these first four readings in the Big Book, is everyone in the group COMPLETELY convinced that they are "powerless over alcohol" and that their "lives had become unmanageable"? *At this meeting, we usually ask each group member to individually and publicly state just how "powerless" they are over alcohol and how "unmanageable" they think their lives were (and are).*

MEETING #4 – THE SECOND STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #4

- ❖ **RE-READ** “There is a Solution” (pp. 17-29) and “More About Alcoholism” (pp. 30-43) – this time, paying special attention to 2nd Step issues.
- ❖ **READ** “We Agnostics” (pp. 44-57) in the Big Book.
- ❖ **READ** “Appendix II: Spiritual Experience” (pp. 567-568) in the Big Book.
- ❖ **READ** “113 ‘Spiritual’ Reference from the First 164 Pages of the Big Book” (pp. 112-116) in this Step Work Group Guide.
- ❖ After reading these four selections, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. If we are being restored to sanity, what kind of “insanity” did we have?
[Hint: it is NOT the crazy things you did while you were drunk. Pages 37 and 40 in the Big Book are just two places where you will find correct answers.]
 2. Write out in detail at least one experience from your drinking life when you “insanely” picked up the first drink – despite your past history and your most fervent intentions.
 3. How has the Book “made clear the distinction” between the alcoholic and the non-alcoholic (p. 44)?
 4. What does the Big Book suggest as the basis for the solution to this insanity (p. 44)?
 5. Do you accept the fact that you have “to find a spiritual basis for life – or else?” (p. 44)? What does that REALLY mean to you?

Meeting #4 - Homework

6. Can you identify with the statement: “Our human resources, as marshaled by the will, were not sufficient; they failed utterly. Lack of power, that was our dilemma” (p. 45)?

If yes, try to list five concrete examples.

7. Note that the “main object [of this book] is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem” (p. 45). Have you been able to find a Power greater than yourself?

If so, how has that Power specifically helped you to solve your problem?

8. How do you respond to the question: “Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe that there is a Power greater than myself?” (p. 47)? Why do you feel that way?

9. “In our personal stories you will find a wide variation in the way each teller approaches and conceives of the Power which is greater than himself. Whether we agree with a particular approach or conception seems to make little difference. Experience has taught us that these are matters about which, for our purpose, we need not be worried. They are questions for each individual to settle for himself.” (p. 50)

Have you settled these questions for yourself? If ‘yes,’ describe how you “approach and conceive” of a Power greater than yourself.

[NOTE: the answer to this question is critical to each individual but it is important that the discussion of the answers to this question NOT become a group discussion about who is right and who is wrong. As quoted above, the Big Book explicitly states “whether we agree with a particular... conception seems to make little difference.” NO arguments. Just respectful listening and understanding.]

10. Did your ideas work before? Will the God idea work now (p. 52)? Try to list at least three examples.

Meeting #4 - Homework

11. On page 53 it says: “we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn’t.”

Have you been “confronted with the question of faith” (p. 53)? How have you resolved it?

12. What are the six ‘promised’ results of coming to believe in a Higher Power (along with doing “certain simple things”)? (See p. 50.)

[NOTE: While the list of “promises” following Step 9 in the Big Book are those most frequently referred to in A.A. meetings, there are often specific benefits listed in the Big Book for taking particular Steps. As you go through this Guide, you will be asked to notice the ‘promises’ that are made for successfully taking Steps 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11 & 12.]

13. “Appendix II: Spiritual Experience” was added to the second printing of the first edition of the Big Book (1941). Why did the writers of the Big Book find it was necessary to add this new section?

14. What exactly do the writers mean when they talk about the “educational variety” (p. 567) of a “spiritual experience” or a “spiritual awakening”?

15. Have you noticed “a profound alteration in [your] reaction to life” (p. 567)? If so, try to list five concrete examples of this “alteration.”

Meeting #4 - Homework

16. Did you find anything in these chapters and in the “Appendix” that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

17. What was of particular significance to you in these readings?

18. The chapter “We Agnostics” might be summarized in three words: **‘BECOME OPEN MINDED!’**

What do you think of this summary and why?

19. **‘BECOME OPEN MINDED!’** also applies to believers - the Big Book is explicit about the need for believers to find a *new* concept of God to help them deal with their alcoholism:

“This physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth’s description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster.” (p. xvi)

“...while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience” (p. 27).

“Well, that’s exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem” (p. 45).

“...call to his attention the fact that however deep his faith and knowledge, he could not have applied it or he would not drink” (p. 93).

If you are already a believer but have been unable to stop drinking in the past, how have you changed your own conception of God so that, with His help, you are now able to stay away from the first drink?

Meeting #4 - Homework

20. What are the things that get in the way of you coming to believe in a Power greater than yourself that can restore you to sanity? (Your self-reliance? your intellect? your pride? your arrogance? etc.)

NOTE: Even if you've always believed in God, what has gotten in the way of your God helping you to stay sober?

21. List at least three reservations that you might still have about the "God" issue. (Even if you believe in God it may not mean that you really trust Him, etc.)

22. The 12th Step says "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." and the Appendix in our Book on "Spiritual Experience" notes that "most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

Has this exercise on the 2nd Step contributed to or helped you develop your 'spiritual awakening'?

If so, how?

- ❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #4 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #4 - Discussion

THE SECOND STEP

STEP TWO: CAME TO BELIEVE THAT A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES COULD RESTORE US TO SANITY

DISCUSSION TEXT: *There is a Solution, More About Alcoholism, We Agnostics and Appendix II: Spiritual Experience.*

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in reaction to last week's meeting. (approximately 10 minutes)
- 3. READ ALOUD THE FOLLOWING NOTE:** During this and all of the following discussions we will have on the Twelve Steps, please be mindful of what our Book says at the top of page 47: "When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice that you may have against spiritual terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you."
- 4. DISCUSS** with the group your answer to **question 1**: "If we are being restored to sanity, what kind of 'insanity' did we have?"

BE SURE TO DISCUSS any positive answers that members might have had to **question 16**: "Did you find anything in these readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?"

DISCUSS with the group your reaction and your answers to **questions 18 and 19** from last week's homework assignment– the "Become Open Minded" questions.

DISCUSS with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to **questions 17, 20, 21 & 22** from the homework assignment.

DISCUSS any of the other fourteen questions (2-16) from last week's writing assignment that may have caused you difficulty or raised questions in your mind. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with (or that they found particularly interesting) before moving on to questions 17 through 22.]

MEETING #5 - THE THIRD STEP (Selfishness is the Problem)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #5

- ❖ **READ** Chapter Five, “How It Works” (pp. 58–63) through the part which concludes Step Three, and consider how it applies to your life for next week’s discussion.
- ❖ After doing this reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. The book says that we must have “rigorous honesty” (p. 58). Do you think that you can be rigorously honest about yourself **BY** yourself? Explain what you mean by that.

2. The Big Book famously says that “half measures availed us nothing” (p. 59). How willing are you to “go to any length” (p. 58) for your recovery? Our book suggests that 50% will get you *nowhere*. What percentage would you put on your own level of willingness? If you are less than 100% - Why?

[NOTE: We are aware that assigning percentages like this is not a technique to be found in the Big Book. Nonetheless, it has been our group experience that doing so forced many of us to think more clearly and more honestly about the real depth of our willingness to change. Since the A.A. program of recovery “demands rigorous honesty” (p. 58), we would encourage you to make a serious effort to provide as honest an answer as you possibly can to this percentage question – and to the others found in this Step Work Group Guide.]

3. The “a, b, c’s” listed on page 60 are a restatement of the First and Second Steps which have been thoroughly covered in the first 57 pages of the Big Book. Rewrite the “a, b, c’s” in your own words.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Meeting #5 - Homework

4. What is the “first requirement” (p. 60) for turning your will and your life over to the care of God *as you understand Him*? What does that REALLY mean to you in relation to your life today?

5. The three paragraphs on the actor (pp. 60-61) are among the most famous in the Big Book. What lies at the heart of the actor’s problems?

6. On page 61, the Big Book notes that anyone who thinks he can become happy and satisfied “if only he manages well” is the “victim of a delusion” and that this delusion is the alcoholic’s “basic trouble.” Is that meant to be taken at face value? If not, why not? If so, what do you think you can do to stop being a “victim” of this “delusion”? Have you had any success with this? If so, list five instances from your life today to illustrate either how well or how poorly you are dealing with this “delusion” in your life today.

7. “Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles” (p. 62). How could selfishness cause all of this trouble? Isn’t drinking the problem? Explain in detail.

Meeting #5 - Homework

8. Can you see the effects of self-centeredness in your drinking life? If so, try to list five examples from your drinking days.

9. Now try to write down five examples of self-centeredness in your life TODAY.

10. “So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making” (p. 62). Write down two “troubles” in your life today and the understanding that you now have of how your self-will has contributed to the creation of those problems.

11. According to the Big Book, how important is it that we “be rid of this selfishness” (p. 62)? What happens if we do not get rid of it?

12. Do you REALLY believe that your selfishness can kill you? If so, how? And, if you do agree with this, how willing are you to “be rid of this selfishness”? Try to put a percentage on how willing you are. If you are less than 100% - Why?

Meeting #5 - Homework

13. Have you had much success with reducing self-centeredness “by wishing or trying on [your] own power”? (p. 62)
What does the Big Book suggest as a solution? Does that seem like a workable solution to you?

14. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

15. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

16. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Has this exercise on the 3rd Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #5 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #5 - Discussion

THE THIRD STEP (Selfishness is the Problem)

STEP THREE: MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 58-63)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in reaction to last week's meeting. (approximately 10 minutes)
- 3. READ ALOUD:** This week's discussion of the text will focus on 'the problem' ("selfishness – self-centeredness!"). Next week, we will discuss 'the solution' and actually take the 3rd Step by saying the prayer on page 63.

Before taking the 3rd Step, we must first realize and then admit that our lives have been “**driven by a hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity**” (p. 62); that we have been living a life characterized by “**self-will run riot**” (p. 62).

We must come to realize that “**self-centeredness... is the root of our troubles**” (p. 62) noting that this is meant to apply to both our drinking days and also to our current sober life.

Also note that this reading introduces two themes that will recur constantly throughout the rest of the Big Book – the notion that **selfishness is central to our problem** and that becoming “**useful**” to others is what we should **be striving for**. This analysis of our problem and the proposed solution are KEY elements of AA's basic message.

- 4. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 1, 2, 7, 9, 12 15 & 16.**

- Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

MEETING #6 – THE THIRD STEP (God is the Solution)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #6

- ❖ **RE-READ** Chapter Five, “How It Works” (pp. 58 – 63) through the part, which concludes Step Three and consider how it applies to your life for next week discussion.
- ❖ After doing this reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. As a “double-check” on how well you understood the lessons from Meeting #5, make a list of the ways in which you were selfish or self-centered today. (If you can’t come up with at least three, please revisit the “honesty” question with your sponsor.)
 2. The Third Step calls for you to ‘make a decision.’ What is the best definition that you can find for the word ‘decision’ and what does it mean for you to ‘make’ one?
 3. The Big Book claims that we need to make TWO decisions if we are to “have God’s help” (p. 62). What is the first of these decisions?
 4. Give at least five examples of how you “play God” in your life – behaviors that you either need to quit or that you are working on quitting or that you have already quit. (For example, are you a giver or a taker? Do you insist on getting your own way? Do you try to control and to manipulate people? Do you lie, steal, act out angrily and violently or indulge in sexual misbehavior, etc?)

Meeting #6 - Homework

5. How willing are you to “quit playing God”? Try to put a percentage on how willing you are. If less than 100% - Why?

6. What is the second decision that we need to make if we are to “have God’s help” (p.62)?

7. On page 59, our Big Book claims that the original members “asked [for] His protection and care with complete abandon.”

Using one or more dictionaries, write out the best definitions you can find for “ask,” “protection,” “care,” “complete” and “abandon.”

8. How close are you to “complete abandon” when it comes to “turning your life and your will over to the care of God as you understand Him”? Try to put a percentage on how close you are to complete abandonment. If less than 100% - Why?

Meeting #6 - Homework

9. Note the 'promises' at the bottom of page 62 and the top of page 63 that will follow the taking of the 3rd Step. Rewrite all of these promises in your own words.

[NOTE: There are at least eight of them.]

10. Are these promises things that you would like to come true in your life today? Why?

11. Given these promises, one concrete indicator of the success or failure with the 3rd Step – aside from not drinking – is the amount of TURMOIL that you have in your day-to-day life. How much turmoil is there in your life today? In the last week? The last month? In this past year? Write down at least three specific examples.

12. How can the 3rd Step provide you with relief from this turmoil? Do you REALLY believe this?

Meeting #6 - Homework

13. In AA, you frequently hear people suggesting that you ‘turn it over.’ How do you actually DO that?

14. The 3rd Step Prayer that appears on page 63 could be called ‘the terms of surrender.’ Please comment.

15. Are you willing to make a decision, take this Step and say this prayer as written on page 63? If not, please explain why?

16. Whether you are comfortable with the wording of the 3rd Step prayer or not, it should be helpful to clarify what the prayer really says.

So, if the wording of the 3rd Step Prayer DOES suit you, rewrite it in your own words.

And, if the wording of the prayer does NOT suit you, for whatever reason, write down your own re-wording of the prayer so that it DOES suit you – as suggested on page 63 of the Big Book: “The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation.”

As you do this, make sure that your paraphrased or rewritten version includes all of the points made in the original 3rd Step Prayer below.

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.

Meeting #6 - Homework

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!

17. Are you willing to say the 3rd Step prayer with the group? If not, why not?

18. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

19. What was of particular significance to you in this week's readings?

20. The 12th Step says "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." and the Appendix in our Book on "Spiritual Experience" notes that "most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

Has this exercise on the 3rd Step contributed to or helped you develop your 'spiritual awakening'?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #6 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #6 - Discussion

THE THIRD STEP (God is the Solution)

STEP THREE: MADE A DECISION TO TURN OUR WILL AND OUR LIVES OVER TO THE CARE OF GOD, AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 58-63)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in reaction to last week's meeting. (approximately 10 minutes)
- 3. NOTE** that our discussion at last week's meeting focused on 'the problem' ("selfishness – self-centeredness"). Having identified and accepted the problem, we are ready to focus on 'the solution' – making a decision to "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*" and then actually saying the 3rd Step prayer.
- 4. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 5, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19 & 20.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: "Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?"
- 5. SINCE** this 3rd Step is such a critical part of our spiritual solution, each group should feel free to decide whether or not they would like to repeat this meeting – if it is felt that doing so would be helpful in gaining a more complete understanding for what is truly involved in taking this 3rd Step.
- 6. AT THE CONCLUSION OF YOUR DISCUSSION,** it is recommended that the group say the 3rd Step Prayer together. NOTE: Most groups do this by kneeling together, but, because of differing religious traditions, this is not always the case. Whether to kneel or not is a decision that must be made by each group and by each individual.

AA 3rd STEP PRAYER: 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!

MEETING #7 – THE FOURTH STEP (Resentments)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #7

- ❖ **READ** Chapter Five, “How It Works” from the bottom of page 63 to the end of the second full paragraph on page 67 of the Big Book. This reading deals with the 4th Step in general and the resentments part of our 4th Step work in particular. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ **SPEND SOME TIME THINKING** during this coming week about how you would go about writing your resentments list using the guide provided by the Big Book. (See also the outline for the resentment portion of the 4th Step on pages 42-45 of this Step Work Group Guide and/or get a copy of the Word file for this 4th Step outline from whoever organized your Step Workgroup.)
- ❖ **COME TO THE NEXT MEETING PREPARED** to actually begin writing your 4th Step resentment list.
- ❖ After doing this reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “searching,” “fearless,” “moral,” and “inventory.”
 2. The Big Book states on page 64 that “Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.” Isn’t alcohol the problem? Do you really believe that “liquor was but a symptom”? Why? Or, why not?
 3. Our Big Book states “when the spiritual malady is overcome, we straighten out mentally and physically” (p. 64).
Has this been your experience? Is that the order in which your recovery occurred – first spiritual and then mental and physical? Provide details from your own experience.

MEETING #7 - Discussion

THE FOURTH STEP (Resentments)

STEP FOUR: MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 63-67)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their 3rd Step work (approximately 10 minutes).
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: Because most of this meeting will be devoted to actually beginning our resentments list, there is nowhere near enough time to discuss all of these homework questions. It is therefore recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.] (approximately 15 minutes)

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. After this discussion, the group should then **BEGIN TO ACTUALLY WORK ON THEIR INDIVIDUAL RESENTMENT INVENTORIES:**

It is important that group members get started on this list while at this meeting. Remember, it’s a program of action! Each group member should write down some of their resentments on paper according to the format explained below. We would suggest, after writing for a few minutes, that you go around the table and ask each group member to talk about an example or two from their list that they might be willing to volunteer. This frequently is helpful in getting others started on their own list.

5. **BEGIN YOUR INVENTORY BY MAKING 3 COLUMNS**, just as it is in the Book (also, see the outline for the 4th Step immediately following the instructions for this meeting). **NOTE:** a digital file of this outline can be provided to you by the organizer of your Step Workgroup if you want to do your final 4th Step work on a computer (which certainly makes it much easier to read!).

I’m resentful at:

The Cause:

Affects my:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Meeting #7 - Discussion

People make this list in a variety of ways. Some do it as a free-flowing “stream of consciousness”. Other start with their childhood and then work forward while some like to start now and work backward. Others begin with their strongest resentment and work their way down from there. Whatever works for you... **it’s just important that you DO it.**

THE FIRST COLUMN is relatively simple and straightforward but if the word “resentful” confuses you, think about the fact that the word actually means to “re-feel” an old anger. We all get angry but when we are angry about something from the past, that is a “resentment.” When all else fails, try substituting “people who piss me off” for “I’m resentful at.”

THE SECOND COLUMN, “The Cause,” is what was done to you by the person or institution.

THE THIRD COLUMN, “Affects”, can be trickier. As it says in the Big Book (pp. 64-65) the things that these resentments affect normally fall into one of six categories. Those categories are our:

- Self-esteem (also called Pride)
- Pocketbooks (Money)
- Security
- Ambitions
- Personal relations
- Sexual relations

SHARE any questions or problems that you might have in making your list with the group – *in so far as that is appropriate on a group level*. It is amazing how helpful this can be to other people in the group. Hearing comments about someone or something who is “going on the list” will often help others in the group with their own lists.

6. AFTER you have finished these 3 columns, the next step is to put out of your mind the wrongs that others have done to you and begin to look for your own mistakes. What did I contribute? What was MY part in this resentment?

To do this, **MAKE A FOURTH COLUMN** and take each one of those relationships you have listed or each one of those institutions, people, or principles and ask yourself: “Where had [I] been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened” (p. 67). **In short, what was MY contribution to this resentment?** “Where [have I] been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking or frightened” (p. 67) in relation to this person, place or institution?

MEETING #8 – THE FOURTH STEP (Fears)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #8

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO WRITE** until you complete the resentments list for this 4th Step. This should be finished before Meeting #8 is held.
- ❖ **READ** Chapter Five, “How It Works” from the last paragraph on page 67 to the end of the last full paragraph on page 68 of the Big Book. This reading deals with the fears part of our 4th Step work. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ **SPEND SOME TIME THINKING** during this coming week about how you would go about writing your fears list. (See also the outline for the fears portion of the 4th Step on pages 49-52 and/or get a copy of the Word file for this 4th Step outline from whoever organized your Step Workgroup.)
- ❖ **COME TO THE NEXT MEETING PREPARED** to actually begin writing your 4th Step fears list.
- ❖ After doing this reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. The Big Book states on page 67 that fear “touches about every aspect of our lives.” Make a list of those areas of your life that are NOT touched by fear.
 2. Has fear been “an evil and corroding thread” (p. 67) in your life? Write at least two instances where this has been true.

MEETING #8 - Discussion

THE FOURTH STEP (Fears)

STEP FOUR: MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 63-67)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their 4th Step resentment inventory (approximately 10 minutes).
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [**NOTE:** Because most of this meeting will be devoted to actually beginning our fears list, there is nowhere near enough time to discuss all of these homework questions. It is therefore recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.] (approximately 15 minutes)

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. Next, **BEGIN TO ACTUALLY WORK ON YOUR FEAR INVENTORIES:**

Just for clarity sake, it may be helpful to note here that generally resentments are all about the past... and fears are all about the future.

5. **START YOUR FEARS INVENTORY BY MAKING 3 COLUMNS.** The first column lists your fear, the second asks the questions “why do I have this fear?” and the third wants to know “can I turn this fear over to God?” (See the outline that follows this meeting format.).

Write down EVERYTHING that you are afraid of: PEOPLE (the police, your father, your boss, etc.), PLACES (heights, jail, etc.) and THINGS (spiders, snakes, success, failure, etc.).

SHARE any questions or problems that you might have in making your list with the group – *in so far as that is appropriate on a group level*. It is amazing how helpful this can be to other people in the group. Hearing comments about someone or something that is “going on the fears list” will often help others in the group with their own lists.

MEETING #9 – THE FOURTH STEP (Sexual History Inventory)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #9

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO WRITE** until you complete the fears list for this 4th Step. These should be finished before Meeting #9 is held.
- ❖ **READ** “How It Works” from the last paragraph on page 68 to the end of the second full paragraph on page 70 of the Big Book. This reading deals with the sexual history inventory part of our 4th Step work. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ **SPEND SOME TIME THINKING** during this coming week about how you would go about writing down your sexual history inventory list. (See also the outline for the sexual inventory portion of the 4th Step provided on pages 57- 61 and/or get a copy of the Word file for this 4th Step outline from whoever organized your Step Workgroup.)
- ❖ **COME TO THE NEXT MEETING PREPARED** to actually begin writing your 4th Step sexual history inventory list.
- ❖ After doing the reading described above, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. What is the “controversy” that AA wants to “stay out of” (p. 69)?
 2. What is the one thing that the Big Book says that we all have regarding sex? (p. 69) Is this true for you?
 3. What are the nine questions that the Big Book suggests we ask ourselves regarding our past sexual conduct? (p. 69)
 4. What does the Big Book suggest as the primary test for our sexual conduct? (p. 69)

Meeting #9 - Homework

5. How can sex NOT be selfish? Explain.

6. What is the goal of doing this sexual history inventory and how do we get there? (p. 69)

7. What must we do if we “fall short of the chosen [sexual conduct] ideal”? (p.70)

8. What four things does the Big Book suggest that we pray for regarding our sexual conduct? (p.70)

9. When all else fails, what does the Big Book propose as a solution to our sexual problems? (p. 70)

10. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #9 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #9 - Discussion

THE FOURTH STEP (Sexual History Inventory)

STEP FOUR: MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 68-70)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their fears list (approximately 20 minutes).
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: Because most of this meeting will be devoted to actually beginning our sexual history inventory, there is nowhere near enough time to discuss all of these homework questions. It is therefore recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.] (approximately 20 minutes).

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

SEXUAL HISTORY INVENTORY (approximately 50 minutes)

4. **A WORD OF CAUTION:** It is possible for this sex inventory meeting to degenerate either into a ‘bull session’ about everyone’s sexual escapades or into a ‘shame session’ about the past. Both of these should be avoided at all costs. The sex inventory is not meant to focus on either exploits or shame. It has to do with our most personal and intimate interpersonal relationships and it is important to treat this topic with the proper consideration and respect.
5. **NEXT, BEGIN TO MAKE THE LIST.** Start out by writing down **ALL** of the people and things that you have had sexual relations with. This list must be searching, fearless and honest – and complete. If the best you can do is “the fat person in Orlando” or “the ugly person in Denver,” then write that down.

This list needs to be a complete and honest inventory of our sexual past – the place where we write down those things in our sex conduct that we wouldn’t tell (or haven’t told) ANYONE. That is, it doesn’t make any difference who the sex was with or what the sex conduct was. Whoever it was, whatever it was, **PUT IT ON THE LIST. ALL OF IT!**

Those of us who have led very sexually active lives or even those who have been moderately active, are probably going to find out shortly after we begin the list that many of our relationships are carbon copies of each other. Therefore, it will not take some of us too long to be saying “**Do I have to do this for EVERYBODY... especially since most of them look the same?**” The answer is “**Yes, you do. All of them!**”

Meeting #9 - Discussion

6. After writing down your list of names, **GO BACK AND REVIEW YOUR CONDUCT** in each of those sexual relations. The instructions for this are on page 69 of the Big Book and they suggest that we ask ourselves the following questions (also, see the form that follows immediately after this meeting outline):

- Have I been **selfish** in this relationship?
- Have I been **dishonest** in this relationship?
- Have I been **inconsiderate** in this relationship?
- Have I **hurt someone** in this relationship?
- Have I unjustifiably **aroused jealousy** in this relationship?
- Have I unjustifiably **aroused suspicion** in this relationship?
- Have I unjustifiably **aroused bitterness** in this relationship?
- **Where was I at fault** in this relationship?
- **What should I have done instead** in this relationship?

7. **NOTE** that page 61 in this Guide asks for detailed answers to two very important questions raised in the Big Book. If there is time – *and to the degree that you consider the topic to be appropriate at the group level* – **DISCUSS** some possible answers to these questions.

SHARE any questions or problems that you might have making your list with the group – *in so far as that is appropriate on a group level*. It is amazing how helpful this can be to other people in the group. Hearing comments about someone or something who is “going on the list” will often help others in the group with their own lists.

A. WRITE OUT WHAT YOUR “SANE AND SOUND IDEAL” WILL BE FOR YOUR SEXUAL CONDUCT IN THE FUTURE. WHAT DO YOU WANT THIS AREA OF YOUR LIFE TO BE LIKE?

B. CAN YOU HONESTLY SAY THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO BEGIN TO “GROW TOWARD” THIS IDEAL? HOW WILLING ARE YOU?

MEETING #10 – THE FOURTH STEP (Harms)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #10

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO WRITE** until you complete the sexual history inventory list for this 4th Step. This should be finished before next week's meeting. (NOTE: With the help of the first three questions in this week's homework assignment, be sure to complete the answers to the two questions on page 61 of this Guide.)
- ❖ **READ** the last two paragraphs of "How It Works" (from the last full paragraph on page 70 to the end of the chapter on page 71 of the Big Book). This reading deals with the harms parts of our 4th Step work. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ **SPEND SOME TIME THINKING** during this coming week about how you would go about writing your harms list. (See also the outline for the harms portion of the 4th Step on pages 65-67 and/or get a copy of the Word file for this 4th Step outline from whoever organized your Step Workgroup.)
- ❖ **COME TO THE NEXT MEETING PREPARED** to actually begin writing your 4th Step harms list.
- ❖ After doing the reading described above, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Having reviewed your sexual history inventory, write out your "sane and sound ideal" for your future sexual conduct on page 60 of this Guide. What would you like this area of your life to be like? (See the three full paragraphs on page 69 for suggestions on how to do this.)
 2. Can you honestly say that you are "willing to grow toward" that ideal? (p. 69). How willing?
 3. Can you honestly and earnestly "pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing"? (p. 70) How honestly? How earnestly?
 4. Our final 4th Step inventory list is mentioned at the end of the last full paragraph on page 70: "We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct..."

This sentence prompts the following question: "Are there some people that you have harmed that do not already show up on your resentment, fears or sexual history inventory lists?"

What kind of people would these be? (Just one example might be 'people you stole money from.')

Meeting #10 - Homework

5. Read the third and fourth sentence in the third paragraph on page 76 where it talks about the 8th Step: “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.”

Does this mean that you actually make your 8th Step list while doing your 4th Step?

6. The last two paragraphs in this chapter offer a recap of the benefits of doing a 4th Step inventory – these are the 4th Step ‘promises.’ Make a list of these benefits.

[NOTE: There are at least seven of them.]

7. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

8. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

9. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Have these exercises on the 4th Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

- ❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #10 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #10 - Discussion

THE FOURTH STEP (Harms)

STEP FOUR: MADE A SEARCHING AND FEARLESS MORAL INVENTORY OF OURSELVES.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *How It Works* (pp. 70-71)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their sexual history inventory list (approximately 20 minutes).
- 3. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: Because most of this meeting will be devoted to actually beginning our harms list, there is nowhere near enough time to discuss all of these homework questions. It is therefore recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.] (approximately 20 minutes).

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing – in so far as it is appropriate at a group level – questions 1, 2 & 3.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

- 4. READ OUT LOUD and DISCUSS:** “How It Works”, the third full paragraph on p. 70 of the Big Book. Also read page 76 of the Big Book, where the authors talk about the 8th Step saying: “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 our inventory.**” So, this part of your inventory is going to be the list that you will use when we get to your 8th and 9th Steps.
- 5. BEGIN TO MAKE YOUR LIST** by referring back to the other lists that you have already made. Who from your resentments list belongs on the harms list? Who from the fears list? Who from the sexual history inventory list? (Also, see the outline that immediately follows the format of this meeting.)

THEN GO BACK AND THINK OF OTHER PEOPLE whom you have harmed that did not show up on any of these other lists. It is certainly possible to have hurt another person and not to have harbored a resentment or a fear or to have had a sexual relationship with them.

SHARE with the group, *as openly as possible*, those people who are going on your list – especially the ones who didn’t show up on any of your prior lists. Doing this will help everyone to be more “searching and fearless” as they compile their own lists.

MEETING #11 – THE FIFTH STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #11

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO WRITE** until you complete your harms list for this 4th Step. This should be finished before next week's meeting.
- ❖ **REVIEW** all four of your inventory lists and then honestly ask yourself the question on page 75: "Is [my] work solid so far?" (Note: One question that may clarify this for you is to ask yourself: "Have I written down EVERYTHING that I never told anyone before?")
- ❖ **MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** to take the 5th Step during the seven days immediately following the next meeting.
- ❖ **READ** "Into Action", Chapter Six of the Big Book from the top of page 72 to the bottom of page 75. This reading deals with the 5th Step which we will discuss next week. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ After doing the reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words "exact," "nature" and "wrongs."
 2. What have we been "trying to get" by making this personal inventory? (p. 72)
 3. What is the best reason for not skipping the 5th Step? How do the authors of the Big Book know this? (pp. 72-73)
 4. What three things are essential to have "learned enough of" to protect yourself from drinking again? What action is "necessary" to ensure that you have "learned enough of" these things? (p. 73)

Meeting #11 - Homework

5. How do you think doing a 5th Step would lead you to “learn enough” about these three things?

6. How do the three AA ‘virtues’ – “willingness, honesty and open mindedness” (see p. 568) – apply to this Step?

7. On page 73, our Big Book talks about the alcoholic as an “actor.” What is the actor’s problem? Can you identify with these three paragraphs? If so, provided some examples from your own life. If no, explain why not.

8. The Big Book says that when we share our 5th Step, “we must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live long or happily in this world” (pp. 73-74). In the same vein, a frequently-heard AA saying claims that “you are only as sick as your secrets!”

How can secrets and a lack of total honesty impact your life and cause you to be unhappy or sick? Give at least three examples from you own experiences.

9. Most of page 74 is devoted to the question of how to go about choosing someone to hear your 5th Step. Why do you think that so much time and attention went into this discussion in 1939, when the Big Book was first written?

10. Once you select someone to hear your 5th Step, how long should it take to do a 5th Step? What two things does the Big Book suggest that you should explain to whoever is going to hear your 5th Step before you begin? (p. 75)

Meeting #11 - Homework

11. There is one key sentence in the Big Book (p. 75) describing how we should approach the 5th Step and what we are meant to do while we take this Step.

Locate and then rewrite that sentence below exactly as it appears in the book.

Next rewrite that sentence using your own words.

12. Consult at least one dictionary and then write out the best definition you can find of the word “every.”

13. What are the eight ‘promises’ that the Big Book makes for successfully completing this 5th Step – “withholding nothing” (p. 75)?

14. What does the Big Book recommend that we do immediately after we have taken this 5th Step? (p. 75)

15. Did you find anything in this chapter that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

16. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

17. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Has this exercise on the 5th Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

- ❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #11 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #11 - Discussion

THE FIFTH STEP

STEP FIVE: ADMITTED TO GOD, TO OURSELVES, AND TO ANOTHER HUMAN BEING THE EXACT NATURE OF OUR WRONGS.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (pp. 72-75)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their harms list (approximately 20 minutes).
- 3. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 8, 11, 13, 14, 16 & 17.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

- 4. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT to do your 5th Step in the coming week.** It is highly recommended that you do your 5th Step work with someone who has gone (or is going) through this Step Workgroup format – they will understand exactly what you are trying to accomplish. Failing that, most people take this Step with their sponsor. [We are aware that the Book provides detailed criteria for choosing someone outside of AA to share your 5th Step with (pp. 74-75), but it should be noted that when the Book was published in April of 1939 there were only TWO AA groups in existence – so going outside of the fellowship was a necessity for anyone reading the Book then. That is rarely the case today.]

TELL THE GROUP who you will be sharing your 5th Step with along with the day and the time you have already agreed upon to do this.

MEETING #12 – THE SIXTH STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #12

- ❖ **TAKE THE 5TH STEP** with your sponsor or a member of this Group (or of other Step Workgroups) or some other appropriate person **BEFORE NEXT WEEK’S MEETING**.
- ❖ **WHEN TAKING THIS STEP**, try to follow as closely as possible the directions given on page 75 of the Big Book:
 - Prepare for “a long talk”
 - Take the time to explain to your partner “what [you] are about to do and why [you] have to do it”
 - “Pocket [your] pride”
 - During your discussion, be sure to “illuminate every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past”
 - Withhold “nothing”
- ❖ **DO NOT DESTROY** your 4th Step inventory at this point. You will need to have it handy when taking Steps 6, 7, 8 & 9.
- ❖ **AFTER TAKING THE 5TH STEP**, go somewhere quiet for one hour and review what you have done up to this point. *Do this by carefully rereading and reviewing everything that you have written down so far as homework for this Step Workgroup.* Ask yourself, “have I omitted anything?” and “is [my] work solid so far?” (p. 75). **Are there STILL some things I haven’t told anyone?**
- ❖ **READ** the first paragraph on page 76 of the Big Book. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ After doing the reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “entirely,” “ready,” “remove,” “defect,” and “character.”
 2. What is “indispensable” for doing the 6th Step and how can you get some of that if it is lacking? (see the top of page 76)

Meeting #12 - Homework

3. On page 13 of the Big Book, Bill describes his first experience with the 6th Step when he was in the hospital recovering from alcoholism. Read that page, locate and then write down the sentence where he “became willing.”

Now, rewrite that sentence using your own words.

4. Just how “entirely ready” are you to have ALL of your defects of character removed? Try to put a percentage on how ready you are. If you are less than 100% ready, explain why in some detail.
5. Are there any defects of character that you really want to hang onto? If not, are you SURE of that?

If you do have any defects that you think you would be more comfortable keeping, what are they? (If more than five, just list the five that you feel most attached to.)

Now, write down the main reason why you think you want to hang onto each of these defects – for instance, “What would you lose?”

Despite all that, could you be willing to have these defects of character removed in order to stay sober?

Meeting #12 - Homework

6. Do you REALLY believe that God, *as you understand Him*, can remove your defects of character? How confident are you in that belief? Try to put a percentage on how confident you are. If you are less than 100% confident, explain why in some detail.

7. Just how quickly do you expect God to accomplish this removal?

Is that a reasonable expectation?

8. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with and that you could not accept?

9. What was of particular significance to you in this week's readings?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #12 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #12 - Discussion

THE SIXTH STEP

STEP SIX: WERE ENTIRELY READY TO HAVE GOD REMOVE ALL THESE DEFECTS OF CHARACTER.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (p. 76)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of your experience with the 5th Step – Was it a good experience? What did you get out of doing your 5th Step? (approximately 15 minutes)
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 4 through 7.** (approximately 30 minutes).

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. **NEXT, BEGIN TO MAKE A WRITTEN LIST OF YOUR DEFECTS.** It is difficult to be honest about your willingness until you have been honest about what your character defects really are.

Start your list by consulting **THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS** (pride, greed, anger, lust, gluttony, envy, sloth) as general categories but be sure to list **SPECIFIC** instances of how these defects manifest themselves in your life (“I am prideful when I...”). Avoid just writing “I am guilty of gluttony.” Write down something specific about your obsession with chocolate ice cream.

In addition, look at **THE TRADITIONAL VIRTUES** of **CHRISTIANITY** (Faith, Hope & Charity), of **AA** (Openness, Honesty & Willingness) and of **ANTIQUITY** (Courage, Justice & Temperance) to see where your behavior has been contrary to these virtues.

Finally, go back to your 4th Step and look at the fourth column on the resentments list and the last two columns on your sexual history inventory list. These should provide you with a number of specific examples of how your character defects have exhibited themselves in your day-to-day life.

SHARE with the group, *as freely as you can*, your insights about your defects. You will be amazed at how quickly and easily everyone’s list will grow once you start to do this.

5. **NEXT, WRITE DOWN OPPOSITE EACH OF THESE DEFECTS THE AMOUNT (PERCENTAGE) OF WILLINGNESS** that you think you have for that character defect to be removed. Putting down a concrete number will help you get in touch with the degree of willingness that you really have.

MEETING #13 – THE SEVENTH STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #13

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO WORK ON YOUR LIST** of character defects and to quantify how willing you are to be free of each one of them.
- ❖ **READ** the second paragraph on page 76 of the Big Book. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ After doing the reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “humbly” and “shortcomings.”
 2. The second paragraph on page 76 starts off “When ready...” What exactly do you think that means? How do you know if you’re “ready”?
 3. Can you write down one example from the past week where you thought you acted “humbly”? (If not, write down the most recent instance you can remember.)
 4. Explain what you think the difference is between being humble and being humiliated?

Meeting #13 - Homework

5. Have you ever actually asked God for help in the removal of some specific shortcoming?
6. When was that? How specific were you? How did you ask?
7. Have you ever actually asked your sponsor or your home group for help in the removal of some specific shortcoming?
8. When was that? How specific were you? How did you ask?
9. Whether you are comfortable with the wording of the 7th Step prayer or not, it should be helpful to clarify what the prayer really says.

So, if the wording of the 7th Step Prayer DOES suit you, rewrite it in your own words.

And, if the wording of the prayer does NOT suit you, for whatever reason, write down your own re-wording of the prayer so that it DOES suit you. Here we rely on the suggestion on page 63 of the Big Book following the 3rd Step prayer: "The wording was, of course, quite optional so long as we expressed the idea, voicing it without reservation."

As you do this, make sure that your paraphrased or rewritten version includes all of the points made in the original 7th Step Prayer below.

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.

Meeting #13 - Homework

10. Are you willing to say the 7th Step prayer with the group? If not, why not?

11. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with and that you could not accept?

12. What was of particular significance to you in this week's readings?

13. The 12th Step says "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." and the Appendix in our Book on "Spiritual Experience" notes that "most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

Has these exercises on the 6th and 7th Steps contributed to or helped you develop your 'spiritual awakening'?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #13 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #13 - Discussion

THE SEVENTH STEP

STEP SEVEN: HUMBLY ASKED HIM TO REMOVE OUR SHORTCOMINGS.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (p. 76)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their 6th Step work (approximately 15 minutes)
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.] (approximately 20 minutes)

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. **HAVE A DISCUSSION** about humility, being humble and what that means in the context of this Step. Talk about the differences between “humility” and “being humiliated”. **COMPARE** the word definitions that you discovered during your homework assignment. If appropriate, share your rewritten version of the 7th Step Prayer with the group.
5. **DISCUSS** the 7th Step Prayer (p. 76), noting especially that it is not a prayer for PERSONAL benefit, but rather a prayer that is meant to result in benefits for others:

AA 7th STEP PRAYER: 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

6. As with the 3rd Step Prayer, **IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE GROUP SAY THE 7th STEP PRAYER TOGETHER.** NOTE: Most groups do this by kneeling together, but, because of differing religious traditions, this is not always the case. Whether to kneel or not is a decision that must be made by each group and by each individual.

MEETING #14 – THE EIGHTH & NINTH STEPS

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #14

- ❖ **READ** from the third paragraph on page 76 to the first full paragraph on page 84 of the Big Book. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ **CONSULT** the harms list that you made for your 4th Step inventory. Now that you have had the benefits of doing the 5th, 6th and 7th Steps, review your harms list to see if there are any other people that you now think should be on this list.
- ❖ To get in touch with the degree of your willingness, **SEPARATE PEOPLE ON THIS LIST INTO THREE GROUPS:** “willing to make amends”, “might be willing” and “never”.
- ❖ **BRING** your newly-edited 4th Step harms inventory to the next meeting.
- ❖ After doing the reading noted above, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:

STEP EIGHT

1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “harm,” “willing” and “amends.”

2. What exactly does it mean when it says “except when to do so would injure them or others”? What constitutes an injury? Explain your answer in detail.

Define “others.” Does it include me? If so, why? If not, why not?

Meeting #14 - Homework

3. Do you think that your own name belongs on this “list of all persons we had harmed” or is this list just meant for other people? Give at least three reasons for your answer.

4. Does God belong on your list? Give at least three reasons for your answer.

5. As you begin to make your “list of all persons we had harmed,” do you think that this list should necessarily include all people close to us – mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, wives, and children?

If ‘no,’ give some of your reasons.

6. Write down the names of at least four people who did NOT show up on the first three 4th Step lists you have already done (resentments, fears, sexual history inventory) but who still belong on your harms list – and why.

Meeting #14 - Homework

7. What does it really mean to you – on a practical level – when you say that you are “willing to make amends” to a particular person?
 - a. How humble are you willing to get? Give at least one example

 - b. Does that mean traveling long distances? (Give an example of when travel would be necessary.) How far? (Try to imagine a case where you might use distance as an excuse for not making amends.)

 - c. Paying large amounts of money? How large?

 - d. How do you plan to make amends to people who have died?

 - e. How do you plan to make amends to people that you can't locate?

 - f. How do you plan to make amends to people that you can't locate?

STEP NINE

8. What is the “real purpose” of putting our lives in order? (top of page 77)

What does that “real purpose” mean to you in your own words?

9. How does the Big Book advise us to handle the question of God and spirituality when making our amends? (pp. 76-77)

Meeting #14 - Homework

10. How much of the money that we stole do we have to pay back? Why? (p. 78)

11. What are the “general principles” that can guide us when faced with the consequences of a “criminal offense”? (pp. 78-80)

[NOTE: there are at least four.]

12. What are the “general principles” that can guide us when faced with “domestic troubles” caused by our past sexual behavior? (pp. 80-83)

13. On page 82, the book mentions that “We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.” If stopping drinking isn’t “enough,” then what is?

14. There is a quote on page 83 of the Big Book: “The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*” What does making amends have to do with your spiritual life?

Meeting #14 - Homework

15. 'The Promises' are listed on pages 83 and 84 and we are told that "we will be amazed before we are half way through." Are the authors of the Big Book talking about being half way through the 12 Steps or half way through the 9th Step?

Explain in detail why you think that.

16. How many 'promises' are there?

17. Rewrite each of the 'promises' in your own words.

18. How many of these 'promises' have already come true for you?

19. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

20. What was of particular significance to you in this week's readings?

21. The 12th Step says "having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..." and the Appendix in our Book on "Spiritual Experience" notes that "most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the 'educational variety' because they develop slowly over a period of time."

Has this exercise on the 8th and 9th Step contributed to or helped you develop your 'spiritual awakening'?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #14 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #14 - Discussion

THE EIGHTH & NINTH STEPS

STEP EIGHT: MADE A LIST OF ALL PERSONS WE HAD HARMED AND BECAME WILLING TO MAKE AMENDS TO THEM ALL.

STEP NINE: MADE DIRECT AMENDS TO SUCH PEOPLE WHEREVER POSSIBLE, EXCEPT WHEN TO DO SO WOULD INJURE THEM OR OTHERS.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (pp. 76-84)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** of any problems or interesting experiences people might have had in the past week with their 7th Step work (approximately 10 minutes).
- 3. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 7, 10, 11, 20 & 21.** (approximately 30 minutes).

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

STEP EIGHT (approximately 25 minutes)

- 4. DISCUSS** with the group, as openly as possible, whatever questions or confusions may come up regarding people who should or shouldn't be on your “harms” list.

Then **DISCUSS** your willingness to make these amends. How many people on your list are in the “Might be Willing” category? How many in the “Never” category?

Finally, **DISCUSS** the necessity of praying to become willing for the people whom you are not willing to make amends to and of **continuing these prayers as a part of your regular, daily routine until that willingness comes.**

STEP NINE (approximately 25 minutes)

- 5. DISCUSS** with the group, as openly as possible, exactly how you intend to make amends to some of these people (face-to-face, monetary, honest letter, etc.). If there are some people who you are uncertain about how to make certain amends or how to make certain amends without hurting others, bring this up with the group.
- 6. COMMIT** to the group that you will work with your sponsor before making amends and continually keep him or her current on your ongoing progress with your 9th Step list.
- If there is any time remaining, **DISCUSS** the quote from page 83 of the Big Book: “The spiritual life is not a theory. *We have to live it.*” What does that REALLY mean to you?

MEETING #15 – THE TENTH STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #15

- ❖ **GO THROUGH** your 8th Step harms list and determine who you will make amends to and how you will go about making those amends.
- ❖ **CONSULT WITH YOUR SPONSOR** or spiritual advisor on all of these decisions before you make any of these amends.
- ❖ Continue to **PRAY FOR WILLINGNESS** to make amends to anyone that you are reluctant to make amends to. They should be explicitly included in your daily prayer life.
- ❖ **WORK THE 9TH STEP**, making amends wherever possible.
- ❖ **READ** about the 10th Step from the middle of page 84 to the bottom of page 85 in the Big Book. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ After doing the reading noted above, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “continued,” “wrong” and “promptly.”
 2. What are the ‘promises’ of the 10th Step? (see the middle and the bottom of page 84 and page 85)
[NOTE: there are at least six of them.]
 3. When our book says that “sanity will have returned” (p. 84), what kind of sanity are they talking about?

Meeting #15 - Homework

4. Why does the 10th Step read “and when we were *wrong* promptly admitted it” rather than ‘when we were *sorry* promptly admitted it’?

5. How many times during this past week did you say the words “I was WRONG”? How many times in the past month or the past year? Do you ever use that word?

Explain in detail.

6. Can you honestly say that you are ‘working’ this Step if you NEVER say the words: “I was wrong”? Explain your answer.

7. What four things does the Big Book suggest we “continue to watch for” when reviewing our behaviors? (p. 84)

8. What four things does the Big Book suggest we do when one of these “crop up”? (p. 84)

Meeting #15 - Homework

9. Our Big Book famously claims that “we have ceased fighting anything and anyone.” Do you think this is REALLY possible? Please provide a detailed answer.

10. Do a quick inventory and write down as many instances as you can remember from the past seven days when you were “fighting” something or someone.

11. What exactly is the “spiritual program of action” mentioned on page 85?

What actions are spiritual?

12. What is our “daily reprieve” from alcohol dependent upon? (p. 85)

Meeting #15 - Homework

13. Exactly how are you supposed to go about maintaining your spiritual condition? (p. 85)

14. Explain the “proper use of the will” mentioned on page 85. Can you give one or two examples of how this might have worked in your life during the past week?

15. Having done this reading, how do you think – on a practical and concrete level – you can incorporate the 10th Step into your life going forward?

16. Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

17. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

18. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Has this exercise on the 10th Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

- ❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #15 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #15 - Discussion

THE TENTH STEP

STEP TEN: CONTINUED TO TAKE PERSONAL INVENTORY AND WHEN WE WERE WRONG PROMPTLY ADMITTED IT.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (pp. 84-85)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** with each group member commenting on their progress with their ongoing 9th Step amends. (approximately 20 minutes)
- 3. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17 & 18.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

- 4. NOTE:** Although it is found in the reading devoted to the 11th Step, the first full paragraph on page 86 of the Big Book provides concrete suggestions on how to do a nightly review of your day.

READ this passage aloud to the group.

- 5. DISCUSS** with the group your commitments to a “program of action” that incorporate the 10th Step into your daily life. Perhaps you would consider committing to taking a nightly inventory? Perhaps you might also want to commit to reporting back to the group next week on how many times you actually said “I was wrong” during the previous seven days. Whatever your commitments, please be specific and concrete about these actions.

MEETING #16 – THE ELEVENTH STEP

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #16

- ❖ **PUT INTO ACTION** your 10th Step commitments, making them a part of your daily life.
- ❖ **READ** from the bottom of page 85 to the end of the chapter. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss this text.
- ❖ After doing the reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:
 1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “prayer” and “meditation.”
 2. What are the ‘promises’ that the Big Book makes regarding the 11th Step? (see pp. 87-88)
[NOTE: there are at least nine of them.]
 3. The Big Book claims that prayer “works” if only we do two things. What are those two things? (pp. 85-86)

Explain those two things in your own words – if you were to do them each day, what would they ‘look like,’ how would they ‘feel’? What concrete actions are we talking about?

4. Summarize in your own words what the Big Book suggests we do each night before retiring. (p. 86)

Meeting #16 - Homework

5. Summarize in your own words what the Big Book suggests we do during our meditation each morning when we awake. (p. 86)
6. Referring to daily meditation, the Big Book says: “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.” (p. 86) How much time do you think you should devote to this practice of relaxing quietly and waiting for the right answers to come each day? Is 5 minutes enough time? 10 minutes? 30 minutes?

Whatever that number is, are you actually willing to devote that much time to daily meditation?

If you don’t already have a discipline of ‘quiet time’ each day, please take whatever amount of time you are willing to commit to this practice daily and actually do it – RIGHT NOW! (If ‘right now’ isn’t convenient, for whatever reason, please be sure to do this meditation practice at least once before the next Step Workgroup meeting.

7. The Big Book suggests that we “conclude the period of meditation with a prayer.” (p. 87) What three specific things are we told to ask for in this prayer?
8. That same paragraph says “you can easily see why” praying “for our selfish ends” has “wasted a lot of time” and “doesn’t work.” Can you “easily see” why this doesn’t work? Explain your answer in some detail.
9. Can this only be done as a solitary exercise or could others be included?
Have you ever included members of your family in your prayer and meditation life?
What were the results of doing that?

Meeting #16 - Homework

10. The Book has a concrete suggestion for what to do if we are “agitated or doubtful” during the day. What is that suggestion? (pp. 87-88)

Do you ever do this? Does it work for you?

11. According to the Big Book, what is the problem with alcoholics?

What is the solution? (p. 88)

12. What kind of regular practice of prayer and meditation would you be willing to commit to starting next week? Describe what you would like to do in detail.

13. Did you find anything in that reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

14. What was of particular significance to you in this week’s readings?

15. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Has this exercise on the 11th Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #16 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #16 - Discussion

THE ELEVENTH STEP

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.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Into Action* (pp. 85-88)

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** with each group member commenting on their progress with their ongoing 9th Step amends and then sharing briefly any important or interesting experiences you might have had in the past week while attempting to put your 10th Step plan into action (approximately 20 minutes).
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 4, 5, 6, 12, 14 & 15.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in this reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. Having done these readings and completed the group discussion, **what specific regimen of prayer and meditation are you willing to commit to?**

DISCUSS with the group your commitments to a “program of action” that incorporate the 11th Step into your daily life. Please be specific and concrete about these commitments.

5. **NOTE:** Many groups **set aside five minutes for a period of silent meditation** at the end of their meeting so that all of the members get a chance to practice the discipline of sitting quietly.

MEETING #17 – TWELFTH STEP (Spiritual Awakening, Carrying the Message)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #17

- ❖ **PUT INTO ACTION** your 11th Step program of prayer and meditation.
- ❖ **READ** the “Appendix II: Spiritual Experience” (pp. 567-568) and “Working with Others” (pp. 89-103) in the Big Book. Come to the meeting fully prepared to discuss these texts.
- ❖ After doing the reading, go back and **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

1. Consult at least one dictionary and write down the best definition(s) you can find for the words “spiritual” and “awakening.”

2. What are the ‘promises’ that the Big Book makes regarding the 12th Step? (see p. 89)
[NOTE: there are at least five of them.]

3. NOTE that this “Appendix II: Spiritual Experience” was added to the Big Book in 1941 when they issued the second printing of the book. The other major change made in that second printing was to change the wording of the 12th Step from “Having had a spiritual **experience** as a result of these steps” to “Having had a spiritual **awakening** as a result of these steps.”

Why do you think that they made these changes? (see p. 567)

Meeting #17 - Homework

4. What is the difference in your mind between having a “spiritual experience” and having a “spiritual awakening”?
5. What is the most important result of the “personality change” that a spiritual awakening provides for an alcoholic? (p. 567)
6. What is the most profound effect when someone undergoes a spiritual experience of the “educational variety”? (p. 567)
7. Give three recent examples from your own life of your “profound alteration in [your] reaction to life” because of your spiritual awakening. (p. 567) Be specific and concrete, rather than general and abstract.

Meeting #17 - Homework

8. What do most AA members think of as “the essence of spiritual experience”? (p. 568)

What does that REALLY mean to you in your own day-to-day life? Please provide some concrete details.

9. Do you think you have had “a spiritual awakening” because of your work on the 12 Steps in the past few months?

Provide three examples of how this *specifically* manifests itself in your life today.

10. According to the “Appendix II,” what is the only thing that can keep an alcoholic from recovery? (p. 568)

11. Rewrite the Herbert Spencer quote found at the end of “Appendix II” in your own words.

12. Did you find anything in that reading that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

13. What was of particular significance to you in this reading?

Meeting #17 - Homework

WORKING WITH OTHERS

14. The 12th Step says that we tried to “carry this message.” What do you think “this message” is? Please be specific in your answer.
15. What does the Big Book claim will keep you sober “when other activities fail”? (p. 89)
16. What does the Big Book advice us to do if our “prospect” doesn’t really want to quit drinking? (pp. 90 & 95)
17. What is the Big Book’s opinion on “hospitalization” for the newly sober? (p. 91)

What do you think that means to us today when dealing with someone who wants to get sober?

Meeting #17 - Homework

18. When confronted by someone who may want to stop drinking, does the Big Book suggest that we listen to their story or that we tell them our own story? (pp. 91-93)

Why do you think the Book offers that advice?

19. Do we just tell them the story of our drinking or should we also talk about our recovery? (p. 94)

20. What is the “main thing” that a new person must be willing to believe in if they are to get sober? (p. 93)

21. At this stage of our recovery, what is our “job now”? (p. 102)

22. How have your own experiences of carrying the message compared with what is described in the Big Book?

23. The Big Book says that “Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery.” (p. 97) Do you think that your recovery has been founded on this principle of helping others? Is so, how? If not, how might it be improved?

Meeting #17 - Homework

24. Have you been diligent in pursuing this aspect of your program?

Why or why not?

25. The last paragraph on page 103 is written entirely in italics. Rewrite this paragraph in your own words.

26. There are a number of other ways besides working directly with new people that we can “carry the message.” Make a list below of as many ways as possible that you can think of doing this.

27. Going forward, what do you plan to do differently to be more available to alcoholics who need your help?

28. Did you find anything in these two readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?

29. What was of particular significance to you in this reading?

30. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Has this exercise on the 12th Step contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #17 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #17 - Discussion

TWELFTH STEP (Spiritual Awakening, Carrying the Message)

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.

DISCUSSION TEXT: *Working with Others* (pp. 89-103) and *Appendix II: Spiritual Awakening* (pp. 567-568)

- 1. OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
- 2. THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** with each group member commenting on their progress with their ongoing 9th Step amends and then sharing briefly any important or interesting experiences you might have had in the past week while attempting to put your 10th and 11th Step resolutions into action (approximately 20 minutes).
- 3. DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever questions the group decides to focus on, **be sure to spend some time discussing questions 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 27, 29 & 30.**

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in these two readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

- 4. DISCUSS** with the group what commitments you are now willing to make (question #27) so that you will be more available and more active in working with others.

MEETING #18 – THE TWELFTH STEP (Practicing These Principles)

HOMEWORK to be done before Meeting #18

- ❖ **CONTINUE TO THINK ABOUT** the spiritual awakening that you may have had as the result of doing these Twelve Steps and the commitments that you have made to working with others.
- ❖ **SIT QUIETLY FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR AND REVIEW** all of the work you have done so far during this Twelve Step Workgroup. (**Note:** leafing through this Workbook to see the ground that you have covered so far should be helpful during this exercise.)
- ❖ After doing this, **ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY WRITING** brief answers to each one:

1. On page 103 of the Big Book it says: “*After all, our problems were of our own making. Bottles were only a symbol. Besides, we have stopped fighting anybody and anything. We have to!*”

Please write some detailed comments on this quote. *For instance:*

- a. Are all of your problems of your own making? If yes, explain how this is true and how knowing this helps you. If not, please list three problems that are not of your own making.

- b. Do you really believe that bottles are “only a symbol” of the turmoil that you caused in your life while drinking? Is so, explain. If not, explain.

- c. Have you “stopped fighting”? “Anyone and anything”? REALLY? Give at least three examples each of either success or failure in stopping fighting.

Meeting #18 - Homework

2. On page 19 of the Big Book, it says “that elimination of our drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs.” Do you think that you have gone beyond the elimination of your drinking and begun to demonstrate these principles in these three areas of your life?

If so, provide at least one concrete example of how your behavior has changed for each of these areas.

3. Made a list of what you consider to be the “principles” of AA – the principles that you are being asked to practice in all your affairs. (If you’re having trouble with this, one way to attempt doing this might be to write down the numbers 1-12 and then try to decide what principle is involved in each of the 12 Steps.)

4. Do you practice these principles in ALL of your affairs?

If not, why not? Give concrete examples.

Meeting #18 - Homework

5. Make a list of ten things that you think you have gained from participating in this Step Workgroup.

6. Earlier in our readings, we learned that selfishness and self-centeredness are “the root of our troubles” (p. 62), that we “must be rid of this selfishness... or it kills us” (p. 62) and that “our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us” (p. 77).

Throughout the Big Book it is noted that one of the most concrete litmus tests of our spiritual transformation (and therefore our sobriety) is whether or not we are living a life that is focused on being “useful to others” [see the list of quotes that appears in this Step Workgroup Guide on pages 109-111.]

a. Do you think you are doing a good job of this today?

b.. If yes, give at least three examples from the past week of things that would qualify as being “useful to others” – things that you would not have been doing a year ago.

c. If no, write down why you think you have not been successful with this lately?

Meeting #18 - Homework

7. Carefully review the list on pages 108-110 in this Step Workgroup Guide. Are you convinced that “being useful to others” constitutes a vital and essential element of the AA program? Explain your answer.

8. Review the seven basic premises listed on page 5 of this Guide. Having carefully read through the Big Book and completed this Step Workgroup, do you agree that these are the underlying foundations of the AA program?

If not, exactly how do you think this list should be modified?

9. The 12th Step says “having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...” and the Appendix in our Book on “Spiritual Experience” notes that “most of our [spiritual] experiences are... [of] the ‘educational variety’ because they develop slowly over a period of time.”

Have these 18 meetings of the Workgroup on the Steps contributed to or helped you develop your ‘spiritual awakening’?

If so, how?

10. Would you be willing to repeat this Workgroup exercise?
 - a. If yes, why? If no, why not?

 - b. If yes, how soon would you be willing to start over again?

11. What would you suggest be changed in this Workgroup book if you were to do this again?

- ❖ **READ** through the outline for Meeting #18 on the next page and then review what you have written so far this week in preparation for that meeting. *Write down below the number(s) of any question(s) that caused you difficulty or that raised questions in your mind.*

MEETING #18 - Discussion

THE TWELFTH STEP (Practicing These Principles)

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.

1. **OPEN THE MEETING** by going around the table and having each group member quickly report on whether they (a) did the reading, (b) did the writing and (c) were in contact with other group members discussing these exercises during the past week.
2. **THEN HAVE A BRIEF DISCUSSION** with each group member commenting on their progress with their ongoing 9th Step amends and then sharing briefly any important or interesting insights or experiences you might have had in the past week regarding “having had a spiritual awakening” and “carrying the message.” (approximately 20 minutes).
3. **DISCUSS** with the group – *in so far as you feel it is appropriate at a group level* – your answers to the questions from the homework writing assignment. [NOTE: there is not enough time in the meeting to discuss all of these homework questions so it is recommended that you confine your discussion to those questions that people had trouble with or that they found particularly interesting.]

Whatever is brought up, **BE SURE TO DISCUSS** any positive answers that members might have had to the question: “Did you find anything in these two readings that you could not agree with or that you could not accept?”

4. **COMMIT** individually to continue with the changes that you have made in your life because of the work you have done with this Step Workgroup.
5. **COMMIT** as a group to stay in touch with each other and to support and encourage each other regarding this ongoing Step work – most especially with any unfinished 9th Step work.
6. **CONSIDER** the suggestion that one way to maintain your awareness of what the Steps require of us on a daily basis is to **READ** pages 86-88 in the Big Book as part of your daily routine.
7. **DESIGNATE** someone in the group to prepare a list of your Step Workgroup’s comments and suggestions for improving this Guide and then send it to us at admin@stratfordmens.org.
8. **NOTE:** Some groups commit to meet one final time in a “reunion meeting” six weeks (or so) after this 18th meeting. The reunion meeting allows everyone to catch up and to report on their progress with the Steps – most especially on any unfinished 9th Step work. Suggested topics for discussion at this meeting would include:
 - What new practices or perspectives have you been able to incorporate into your life because of the Step Workgroup?
 - Are there any commitments that you made during the Step Workgroup that have not yet been done?
 - Have you continued to stay in active contact with members of the Step Workgroup?
 - Discuss the importance and implementation of the 12 Steps as a way of life.
 - Has “the” program become “your” program?

APPENDIX I

77 Big Book References to the INSANITY of the FIRST DRINK

We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a **seemingly hopeless state of mind** and body. (*Foreword to First Edition*, p. xiii)

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**. (*The Doctor's Opinion*, p. xxvi)

These men were not drinking to escape; they were drinking to overcome a craving **beyond their mental control**. (*The Doctor's Opinion*, p. xxx)

Shortly afterward I came home drunk. There had been no fight. Where had been my high resolve? I simply didn't know. It **hadn't even come to mind**. Someone had pushed a drink my way, and I had taken it. **Was I crazy?** I began to wonder, for such an appalling lack of perspective seemed near being just that. (*Bill's Story*, p. 5)

Best of all, I met a kind doctor who explained that though certainly selfish and foolish, I had been **seriously ill, bodily and mentally**. (*Bill's Story*, p. 7)

Then came **the insidious insanity of that first drink**, and on Armistice Day 1934, I was off again. (*Bill's Story*, p. 8)

Rumor had it that he had been committed for **alcoholic insanity**. (*Bill's Story*, p. 9)

Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in the face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a **hopeless condition of mind** and body. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 20)

Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and **mentally**. (*There Is A Solution*, pp. 20-21)

Why does he behave like this? If hundreds of experiences have shown him that one drink means another debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation, **why is it he takes that one drink?** Why can't he stay on the water wagon? **What has become of the common sense and will power** that he still sometimes displays with respect to other matters? (*There Is A Solution*, p. 22)

Perhaps there never will be a full answer to these questions. Opinions vary considerably as to **why the alcoholic reacts differently from normal people**. We are not sure why, once a certain point is reached, little can be done for him. We cannot answer the riddle. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 22)

We are equally positive that once he takes any alcohol whatever into his system, something happens, both in the bodily and **mental** sense, which makes it virtually impossible for him to stop. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 22)

These observations would be academic and pointless if our friend never took **the first drink**, thereby setting the terrible cycle in motion. Therefore, **the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind**, rather than in his body. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 23)

Once in a while he may tell the truth. And the truth, strange to say, is usually that he has no more idea why he took **that first drink** than you have. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 23)

*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.** (*There Is A Solution*, p. 24)

The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer **do not crowd into the mind to deter us.** If these thoughts occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with **the old threadbare idea** that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a **complete failure of the kind of defense** that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 24)

When **this sort of thinking** is fully established in an individual with alcoholic tendencies, he has probably placed himself beyond human aid, and unless locked up, may die or go **permanently insane.** (*There Is A Solution*, p. 24)

The doctor said: "You have **the mind of a chronic alcoholic.** I have never seen one single case recover, where **that state of mind** existed to the extent that it does in you." Our friend felt as though the gates of hell had closed on him with a clang. (*There Is A Solution*, p. 27)

No person likes to think he is bodily and **mentally** different from his fellows. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 30)

We doubt if many of them can do it, because none will really want to stop, and hardly one of them, because of the **peculiar mental twist** already acquired, will find he can win out. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 33)

So we shall describe some of **the mental states that precede a relapse into drinking,** for obviously this is the crux of the problem. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 35)

What sort of thinking dominates an alcoholic who repeats time after time **the desperate experiment of the first drink?** (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 35)

"Suddenly **the thought crossed my mind** that if I were to put an ounce of whiskey in my milk it couldn't hurt me on a full stomach. I ordered a whiskey and poured it into the milk. I vaguely sense I was not being any too smart, but I reassured as I was taking the whiskey on a full stomach. The experiment went so well that I ordered another whiskey and poured it into more milk. That didn't seem to bother me so I tried another." (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 36)

Whatever the precise definition of the word may be, we call this **plain insanity.** (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 37)

But there was always **the curious mental phenomenon** that parallel with our sound reasoning there inevitably ran some **insanely** trivial excuse for taking **the first drink.** Our sound reasoning failed to hold us in check. The **insane idea** won out. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 37)

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. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 37)

Such a man would be **crazy,** wouldn't he? (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 38)

However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been **strangely insane.** It's strong language but isn't it true? (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 38)

I rather appreciated your ideas about the subtle **insanity** which precedes **the first drink,** but I was confident it could not happen to me after what I had learned. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 40)

"I went to my hotel and leisurely dressed for dinner. As I crossed the threshold of the dining room, **the thought came to mind** that it would be nice to have a couple of cocktails with dinner. That was all. Nothing more. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 41)

"As soon as I regained **my ability to think,** I went carefully over that evening in Washington. *Not only had I been off guard, I had made no fight whatever against the first drink. This time I had not thought of the consequences at all.* I had

commenced to drink as carelessly as though the cocktails were ginger ale. I now remembered what my alcoholic friends had told me, how they prophesied that if I had **an alcoholic mind**, the time and place would come I would drink again. They had said that **though I did raise a defense, it would one day give way before some trivial reason for having a drink**. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 41)

I knew from that moment that I had **an alcoholic mind**. I saw that will power and self-knowledge would not help in those **strange mental blank spots**. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 42)

They piled on me heaps of evidence to the effect that an **alcoholic mentality**, such as I had exhibited in Washington, was hopeless condition. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 42)

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. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 43)

Even so has God restored us all to **our right minds**. (*We Agnostics*, p. 57)

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. (*How It Works*, p. 66)

The **insanity** of alcohol returns and we drink again. (*How It Works*, p. 66)

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. (*Working With Others*, p. 92)

Show him, from your own experience, how **the queer mental condition** surrounding **that first drink** prevents normal functioning of the will power. (*Working With Others*, p. 92)

Talk about the conditions of body and **mind** which accompany it. (*Working With Others*, p. 92)

We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has **an alcoholic mind**; there is something the matter with his spiritual status. (*Working With Others*, p. 101)

In a weak moment he may take your dislike of his high-stepping friends as one of those **insanely** trivial excuses to drink. (*To Wives*, p. 120)

A body badly burned by alcohol does not often recover overnight nor do **twisted thinking** and depression vanish in a twinkling. We are convinced that a spiritual mode of living is a most powerful health restorative. We, who have recovered from serious drinking, are miracles of **mental health**. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 133)

But these scrapes can generally be charged, no matter how bad, to **the abnormal action of alcohol on his mind**. (*To Employers*, p. 140)

You now know more about alcoholism. You can see that he is **mentally** and physically sick. (*To Employers*, p. 141)

Fear gripped him. He was on thin ice. Again it was **the old, insidious insanity – that first drink**. (*A Vision For You*, p. 154)

The man in the bed was told of the acute poisoning from which he suffered, how it deteriorates the body of an alcoholic and **warps his mind**. There was much talk about **the mental state** preceding **the first drink**. (*A Vision For You*, p. 157)

APPENDIX II

114 Big Book References to being “SPIRITUAL”

Though we work out our solution on the spiritual as well as an altruistic plane, we favor hospitalization for the alcoholic who is very jittery or befogged. (*The Doctor's Opinion*, p. xxvi)

For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. (*Bill's Story*, pp. 14-15)

When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 25)

The great fact is just this, and nothing less: That we have had deep and effective spiritual experiences which have revolutionized our whole attitude toward life, toward our fellows and toward God's universe. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 25)

One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 25)

Some of our alcoholic readers may think they can do without spiritual help. Let us tell you the rest of the conversation our friend had with his doctor. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 27)

Here and there, once in a while, alcoholics have had what are called vital spiritual experiences. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 27)

This hope, however, was destroyed by the doctor's telling him that while his religious convictions were very good, in his case they did not spell the necessary vital spiritual experience. (*There Is A Solutions*, p. 27)

In the following chapter, there appears an explanation of alcoholism, as we understand it, then a chapter addressed to the agnostic. Many who once were in this class are now among our members. Surprisingly enough, we find such convictions no great obstacle to a spiritual experience. (*There Is A Solutions*, pp. 28-29)

Whether such a person can quit upon a nonspiritual basis depends upon the extent to which he has already lost the power to choose whether he will drink or not. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 34)

All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 35)

Fred would not believe himself an alcoholic, much less accept a spiritual remedy for his problem. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 39)

Then they outlined the spiritual answer and program of action which a hundred of them had followed successfully. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 42)

Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems. (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 42)

Though not a religious person, I have profound respect for the spiritual approach in such cases as yours. For most cases, there is virtually no other solution." (*More About Alcoholism*, p. 43)

If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer. (*We Agnostics*, p. 44)

To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a **spiritual** basis are not always easy alternatives to face. (*We Agnostics, p. 44*)

But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a **spiritual** basis of life or else. (*We Agnostics, p. 44*)

That means we have written a book which we believe to be **spiritual** as well as moral. (*We Agnostics, p. 45*)

But his face falls when we speak of **spiritual** matters, especially when we mention God, for we have re-opened a subject which our man thought he had neatly evaded or entirely ignored. (*We Agnostics, p. 45*)

When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other **spiritual** expressions which you find in this book. Do not let any prejudice you may have against **spiritual** terms deter you from honestly asking yourself what they mean to you. At the start, this was all we needed to commence **spiritual** growth, to effect our first conscious relation with God as we understood Him. (*We Agnostics, p. 47*)

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. (*We Agnostics, p. 47*)

That was great news to us, for we had assumed we could not make use of **spiritual** principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe. When people presented us with **spiritual** approaches, how frequently did we all say, "I wish I had what that man has. I'm sure it would work if I could only believe as he believes. (*We Agnostics, p. 47*)

Many of us have been so touchy that even casual reference to **spiritual** things make us bristle with antagonism. (*We Agnostics, p. 48*)

Faced with alcoholic destruction, we soon became as open minded on **spiritual** matters as we had tried to be on other questions. (*We Agnostics, p. 48*)

We used to amuse ourselves by cynically dissecting **spiritual** beliefs and practices when we might have observed that many **spiritually**-minded persons of all races, colors, and creeds were demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness and usefulness which we should have sought ourselves. (*We Agnostics, p. 49*)

We never gave the **spiritual** side of life a fair hearing. (*We Agnostics, p. 50*)

Are not some of us just as biased and unreasonable about **the realm of the spirit** as were the ancients about the realm of the material? (*We Agnostics, p. 51*)

Yet we had been seeing another kind of flight, a **spiritual** liberation from this world, people who rose above their problems. They said God made these things possible, and we only smiled. We had seen **spiritual** release, but liked to tell ourselves it wasn't true. (*We Agnostics, p. 55*)

One night, when confined in a hospital, he was approached by an alcoholic who had known a **spiritual** experience. (*We Agnostics, p. 56*)

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. (*How It Works, p. 60*)

The point is, that we are willing to grow along **spiritual** lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim **spiritual** progress rather than **spiritual** perfection. (*How It Works, p. 60*)

We found it very desirable to take this **spiritual** step with an understanding person, such as our wife, best friend, or **spiritual** adviser. (*How It Works, p. 63*)

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. In dealing with resentments, we set them on paper. (*How It Works, p. 64*)

But with the alcoholic, whose hope is the maintenance and growth of a **spiritual** experience, this business of resentment is infinitely grave. (*How It Works, p. 66*)

We realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps **spiritually** sick. (*How It Works, p. 66*)

We can laugh at those who think **spirituality** the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. (*How It Works, p. 68*)

We may have had certain **spiritual** beliefs, but now we begin to have a **spiritual** experience. (*Into Action, p. 75*)

To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the **spiritual** feature on our first approach. (*Into Action, p. 76*)

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. (*Into Action, p. 76*)

To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the **spiritual** feature on our first approach. (*Into Action, p. 76*)

He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of **spiritual** discoveries. (*Into Action, p. 77*)

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. (*Into Action, p. 79*)

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. (*Into Action, p. 83*)

That is how we react so long as we keep in fit **spiritual** condition. (*Into Action, p. 85*)

It is easy to let up on the **spiritual** program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our **spiritual** condition. (*Into Action, p. 85*)

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.* (*Working With Others, p. 93*)

When dealing with such a person, you had better use everyday language to describe **spiritual** principles. (*Working With Others, p. 93*)

Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or **spiritual** hilltop; simply lay out the kit of **spiritual** tools for his inspection. (*Working With Others, p. 95*)

If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other **spiritual** approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. (*Working With Others, p. 95*)

Should they accept and practice **spiritual** principles, there is a much better change that the head of the family will recover. (*Working With Others, p. 97*)

He should concentrate on his own **spiritual** demonstration. (*Working With Others, p. 98*)

Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of **spiritual** progress. (*Working With Others, p. 100*)

Assuming we are **spiritually** fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. (*Working With Others, p. 100*)

We meet these conditions every day. An alcoholic who cannot meet them, still has an alcoholic mind; there is something the matter with his **spiritual** status. (*Working With Others, p. 101*)

But be sure you are on solid **spiritual** ground before you start and that your motive in going is thoroughly good. (*Working With Others, p. 102*)

If you think he will be shy of a **spiritual** remedy, ask him to look at the chapter on alcoholism. (*To Wives, p. 112*)

If such women adopt a **spiritual** way of life their road will be smoother. (*To Wives, p. 114*)

We have elsewhere remarked how much better life is when lived on a **spiritual** plane. (*To Wives, p. 116*)

As our husbands began to apply **spiritual** principles in their lives, we began to see the desirability of doing so too. (*To Wives, p. 116*)

Now we try to put **spiritual** principles to work in every department of our lives. When we do that, we find it solves our problems too. (*To Wives, p. 116*)

If your husband is trying to live on a **spiritual** basis, he will also be doing everything in his power to avoid disagreement or contention. (*To Wives, p. 118*)

Your husband will be the first to say it was your devotion and care which brought him to the point where he could have a **spiritual** experience. (*To Wives, p. 119*)

Your husband will see at once that he must redouble his **spiritual** activities if he expects to survive. You need not remind him of his **spiritual** deficiency -- he will know of it. (*To Wives, p. 120*)

For example, we know of situations in which the alcoholic or his wife have had love affairs. In the first flush of **spiritual** experience they forgave each other and drew closer together. (*The Family Afterward, p. 124*)

The family is mystified. They criticize, pointing out how he is falling down on his **spiritual** program. (*The Family Afterward, p. 126*)

If they sense these things, they will not take so seriously his periods of crankiness, depression, or apathy, which will disappear when there is tolerance, love, and **spiritual** understanding. (*The Family Afterward, p. 127*)

For us, material well-being always followed **spiritual** progress; it never preceded. (*The Family Afterward, p. 127*)

Assume on the other hand that father has, at the outset, a stirring **spiritual** experience. (*The Family Afterward, p. 128*)

There is talk about **spiritual** matters morning, noon and night. He may demand that the family find God in a hurry, or exhibit amazing indifference to them and say he is above worldly considerations. He may tell mother, who has been religious all her life, that she doesn't know what it's all about, and that she had better get his brand of **spirituality** while there is yet time. (*The Family Afterward, p. 128*)

Dad is not so **spiritual** after all, they say. (*The Family Afterward, p. 128*)

Many of us have experienced dad's elation. We have indulged in **spiritual** intoxication. (*The Family Afterward, p. 128*)

He will perceive that his **spiritual** growth is lopsided, that for an average man like himself, a **spiritual** life which does not include his family obligations may not be so perfect after all. If the family will appreciate that dad's current behavior is but a phase of his development, all will be well. In the midst of an understanding and sympathetic family, these vagaries of dad's **spiritual** infancy will quickly disappear. (*The Family Afterward, p. 129*)

Instead of treating the family as he should, he may retreat further into himself and feel he has **spiritual** justification for so doing. (*The Family Afterward, p. 129*)

Though the family does not fully agree with dad's **spiritual** activities, they should let him have his head. (*The Family Afterward, p. 129*)

Though some of his manifestations are alarming and disagreeable, we think dad will be on a firmer foundation than the man who is placing business or professional success ahead of **spiritual** development. (*The Family Afterward, p. 130*)

Those of us who have spent much time in the world of **spiritual** make-believe have eventually seen the childishness of it. (*The Family Afterward, p. 130*)

We have found nothing incompatible between a powerful **spiritual** experience and a life of sane and happy usefulness. (*The Family Afterward, p. 130*)

Whether the family has **spiritual** convictions or not, they may do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live. They can hardly fail to approve these simple principles, though the head of the house still fails somewhat in practicing them. Nothing will help the man who is off on a **spiritual** tangent so much as the wife who adopts a sane **spiritual** program, making a better practical use of it. (*The Family Afterward, p. 130*)

Being possessed of a **spiritual** experience, the alcoholic will find he has much in common with these people, though he may differ with them on many matters. (*The Family Afterward, p. 131*)

We are convinced that a **spiritual** mode of living is a most powerful health restorative. (*The Family Afterward, p. 133*)

Whether the family goes on a **spiritual** basis or not, the alcoholic member has to if he would recover. (*The Family Afterward, p. 135*)

Of course our friend was wrong -- dead wrong. He had to painfully admit that and mend his **spiritual** fences. (*The Family Afterward, p. 135*)

TO EMPLOYERS

NONE

A **spiritual** experience, he conceded, was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high upon the basis suggested. (*A Vision For You, p. 155*)

Both saw that they must keep **spiritually** active. (*A Vision For You, p. 156*)

The use of **spiritual** principles in such case was not so well understood as it is now. (*A Vision For You, pp. 156-157*)

The two friends spoke of their **spiritual** experience and told him about the course of action they carried out. (*A Vision For You, p. 157*)

He had begun to have a **spiritual** experience. (*A Vision For You, p. 158*)

"The way you fellows put this **spiritual** stuff makes sense. I'm ready to do business. I guess the old folks were right after all." (*A Vision For You, p. 159*)

They experienced a few distressing failures, but in those cases they made an effort to bring the man's family into a **spiritual** way of living, thus relieving much worry and suffering. (*A Vision For You, p. 159*)

In addition to these casual get-togethers, it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone or everyone interested in a **spiritual** way of life. (*A Vision For You, pp. 159-160*)

Understanding our work, he can do this with an eye to selecting those who are willing and able to recover on a **spiritual** basis. (*A Vision For You, p. 162*)

APPENDIX III

11 Big Book References for “When all else fails... WORK WITH OTHERS”

The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. **He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic.** That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician. (*Foreword to the Second Edition, p. xvi*)

My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs. **Particularly was it imperative to work with others as he had worked with me.** Faith without works was dead, he said. And how appallingly true for the alcoholic! For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. If he did not work, he would surely drink again, and if he drank, he would surely die. Then faith would be dead indeed. With us it is just like that. (*Bill's Story, p. 14*)

This sometimes nearly drove me back to drink, but I soon found that **when all other measures failed, work with another alcoholic would save the day.** (*Bill's Story, p. 15*)

Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs. (*There Is A Solution,, p. 20*)

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. (*How It Works, p. 70*)

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. Remember they are very ill. (*Working with Others, p. 89*)

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. (*Working with Others, p. 94*)

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. (*Working with Others, p. 97*)

Showing others who suffer how we were given help is the very thing which makes life seem so worth while to us now. (*The Family Afterward, p. 124*)

Though the family does not fully agree with dad's spiritual activities, they should let him have his head. Even if he displays a certain amount of neglect and irresponsibility towards the family, it is well to **let him go as far as he like in helping other alcoholics. During those first days of convalescence, this will do more to insure his sobriety than anything else.** (*The Family Afterward, p. 129*)

He may wish to do a lot for other alcoholics and something of the sort may come up during business hours. A reasonable amount of latitude will be helpful. **This work is necessary to maintain his sobriety.** (*To Employers, p. 146*)

APPENDIX IV

72 Big Book References to being USEFUL & HELPFUL to OTHERS

Many of these references refer specifically to working with another alcoholic, but over half of them are more general in nature and recommend that we apply the principle of ‘usefulness’ to everyone we come in contact with.

We simply wish to be **helpful** to those who are afflicted. (*Foreword to the First Edition, p. xiv*)

We should like to **helpful** to such cases. (*Foreword to the First Edition, p. xiv*)

...he was convinced of the need for moral inventory, confession of personality defects, restitution of those harmed, **helpfulness to others...** (*Foreword to the Second Edition, p. xvi*)

...only an alcoholic could **help** an alcoholic. (*Foreword to the Second Edition, p. xvi*)

...we work out our solutions on the spiritual as well as **an altruistic plane...** (*The Doctor’s Opinion, p. xxvi*)

The **unselfishness** of these men as we have come to know them, the entire absence of profit motive, and their **community spirit**, is indeed inspiring to one who has labored long and wearily in this alcoholic field. (*The Doctor’s Opinion, p. xxvii*)

...nothing which has contributed more to the rehabilitation of these men than **the altruistic movement** now growing up among them. (*The Doctor’s Opinion, p. xxviii*)

I was to know happiness, peace and **usefulness...** (*Bill’s Story, p. 8*)

Never was I to pray for myself, except as my requests bore on my **usefulness to others.** (*Bill’s Story, p. 13*)

Perhaps I could **help** some of them. (*Bill’s Story, p. 14*)

For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and **self-sacrifice for others**, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead. (*Bill’s Story, pp. 14-15*)

...abandoned ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of **helping** other alcoholics... (*Bill’s Story, p. 15*)

...nothing whatever except the sincere desire to be **helpful...** (*There Is A Solution, p. 18*)

This should suggest a **useful** program for anyone concerned with a drinking problem. (*There Is A Solution, p. 19*)

...attitudes which make us more **useful** to others. (*There Is A Solution, p. 19*)

Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers, depend upon **our constant thoughts of others** and how we may **help** meet their needs. (*There Is A Solution, p. 20*)

...a way of living infinitely more satisfying and, I hope, more **useful** than the life I lived before. (*More About Alcoholism, p. 43*)

...demonstrating a degree of stability, happiness and **usefulness** which we should have sought ourselves. (*We Agnostics, p. 49*)

This is a sick man. How can I be **helpful** to him? (*How It Works, p. 67*)

If we do, we destroy our chance of being **helpful**. (*How It Works, p. 67*)

...we throw ourselves the harder into **helping** others. (*How It Works, p. 70*)

The rule is we must be hard on ourself, but always **considerate of others**. (*Into Action, p. 74*)

...which stands in the way of my **usefulness** to you and my fellows. (*Into Action, p. 76*)

Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of **maximum service** to God and the people about us. (*Into Action, p. 77*)

We go to him in a **helpful** and forgiving spirit... (*Into Action, p. 77*)

We will see how our experience can **benefit** others... (*Into Action, p. 84*)

We will lose interest in selfish things and **gain interest** in our fellows... (*Into Action, p. 84*)

Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can **help**. (*Into Action, p. 84*)

...thinking of **what we could do for others**... (*Into Action, p. 86*)

...that would diminish our **usefulness** to others. (*Into Action, p. 86*)

We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be **helped**. (*Into Action, p. 87*)

You can **help** when no one else can. (*Working With Others, p. 89*)

...to see them **help** others... (*Working With Others, p. 89*)

...you can be uniquely **helpful** to other alcoholics. (*Working With Others, p. 89*)

To be **helpful** is our only aim. (*Working With Others, p. 89*)

...who, as part of their own recovery, try to **help** others... (*Working With Others, p. 90*)

To be vital, faith must be accompanied by **self sacrifice** and **unselfish**, constructive action. (*Working With Others, p. 93*)

...why you are now endeavoring to be **helpful** to him. (*Working With Others, p. 94*)

...only that he will try to **help** other alcoholics when he escapes his own difficulties. (*Working With Others*, p. 94)

Suggest how important it is that he **place the welfare of other people ahead** of his own. (*Working With Others*, p. 94)

...if he wants to get well you will do anything to **help**. (*Working With Others*, p. 95)

Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. (*Working With Others*, p. 97)

...discussed in an atmosphere of **helpfulness** and friendliness. (*Working With Others*, p. 99)

...the alcoholic continues to demonstrate that he can be sober, considerate and **helpful**... (*Working With Others*, p. 99)

You may spoil your chance of being **helpful** if you do. (*Working With Others*, p. 100)

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**. (*Working With Others*, p. 102)

Experience shows that such an attitude is not **helpful** to anyone. (*Working With Others*, p. 103)

...your chance of accomplishing anything **useful**... (*To Wives*, p. 111)

...a full and **useful** life... (*To Wives*, p. 111)

Let him see that you want to be **helpful** rather than critical. (*To Wives*, p. 111)

Meanwhile you might try to **help** the wife of another serious drinker. (*To Wives*, p. 112)

We urge you to try our program, for nothing will be so **helpful** to your husband... (*To Wives*, p. 117)

...yet he spends long hours **helping** other men and their families. (*To Wives*, p. 119)

Both of you will awaken to a new **sense of responsibility for others**. (*To Wives*, p. 119)

Cheer him up and ask him how you can be still more **helpful**. (*To Wives*, p. 120)

...unless some good and **useful** purpose is to be served... (*The Family Afterward*, p. 125)

He is not likely to get far in any direction if he fails to show **unselfishness** and love under his own roof. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 127)

...let him go as far as he likes in **helping** other alcoholics. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 129)

...nothing incompatible between a powerful spiritual experience and a life of sane and happy **usefulness**. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 130)

...and is sure to find new avenues of **usefulness** and pleasures. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 132)

...cheerfulness and laughter make for **usefulness**. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 132)

...given the power to **help** others. (*The Family Afterward*, p. 132)

...ought to prove exceptionally **useful**... (*To Employers*, p. 136)

This seemed to me like an opportunity to be **helpful**... (*To Employers*, p. 138)

...these men are to become happy, respected, and **useful** once more. (*A Vision For You*, p. 153)

...become a respected and useful member of his community. He has **helped** other men recover... (*A Vision For You*, p. 158)

“...now felt they had to **give to others** what they had found, or be sunk. (*A Vision For You*, p. 158)

Though they knew they must **help** other alcoholics if they would remain sober... (*A Vision For You*, p. 159)

It was transcended by the happiness they found by **giving themselves to others**. (*A Vision For You*, p. 159)

...with hearts and minds attuned to **the welfare of others**. (*A Vision For You*, p. 161)

...there is the same **helpfulness** to one another... (*A Vision For You*, p. 162)

...discovered the joy of **helping** others to face life again... (*A Vision For You*, p. 164)