

Step 11 'on awakening'—line by line

What the Book says	My experience
<p>On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Under these conditions we can employ our mental faculties with assurance, for after all God gave us brains to use. Our thought-life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.</p>	<p>I have to trust that if I pray for my thinking to be directed, it will be, or at least it will be more likely that my thinking is actually inspired by God.</p> <p>The three things my thinking must be divorced from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-pity—upset because things haven't gone my way. • Self-seeking motives—wanting things to go my way. • Dishonest motives—secretly wanting things to go my way. <p>Essentially, I need to drop my way and ask for God's way instead.</p> <p>I do this, because my way tends to involve getting enough money, sex, power, prestige, comfort, thrills, and looks to fill a gap in me that is there only in my perception. That is why they do not work—they cannot fill the gap, because the gap is not there. I have seen sufficiently, now, that the chase is painful, the frustration of failure in painful, and, after a moment's satisfaction, success is disillusioning and disappointing.</p> <p>I would rather be quiet and serve, which is why I practice Step Eleven. This gives me all that my plan promised—but never consistently delivered.</p> <p>Once my thinking is straightened out, I plan the day.</p> <p>It is important to remember that God's will is nothing fancy or abstract—it's a list of things to do and an attitude to take towards all such things.</p> <p>As for God's will as regards my mind: my thoughts must be in the here and now (unless I am legitimately planning for the future or analysing the past solely to work out what to do differently in the future), for it is only there God may be found.</p> <p>In brief, Step Eleven requires that I generate a plan for the day.</p>
<p>In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.</p>	<p>This means what it says. It took years in recovery to discover I do not have to work anything out; I need only ask, namely for three things: inspiration (spirit), an intuitive thought (mind), or a decision (action). Spirit comes first—the spirit must be one that embodies the Step Three decision: staying close to God and performing His work well (i.e. serving God by serving others, which means helping the rest of God's kids get their heart's desire).</p>

	<p>We relax and take it easy—these are instructions. I am enjoined not to be tense and fretful, not to rush, not to impose unnatural stresses, artificial timetables, and unnecessary goals on myself.</p> <p>If I struggle, again, I ask; in fact, I need only ever ask; a demand is never necessary, and the application of muscle will not bring about the needed result.</p> <p>If I am given peace it is because I have decided I want peace—which is my inheritance—above all else. If it is truly wanted, it is instantly given, because it is already there. The miracle only is that the block to sight is removed, and the peace that is always with me and available to me becomes manifest.</p> <p>If I am not at peace, I am in illusion. I cannot strip myself of illusions easily but I can realise I do not want what I have and want to see the world a different way.</p> <p>When I decide I want to relax, I can ask myself: is anything bad happening right now? There never is. If I think it is bad, I must ask whether it is really happening and whether it is really bad. What is happening right now? The shuffling of the neighbours across the floor, the distant drone of traffic ... and me sitting in silence. That is what is happening. Even physical pain can be bearable if I remove my judgement from it.</p> <p>So: relax.</p>
<p>What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas. Nevertheless, we find that our thinking will, as time passes, be more and more on the plane of inspiration. We come to rely upon it.</p>	<p>For me to do wrong I must decide to do wrong. Whom do I decide with? God speaking through those around me whose lives are functioning smoothly and happily? Or fear, guilt, and anger? I cannot decide alone: whatever I decide with will ultimately dictate the results.</p> <p>I check out major decisions and even a number of minor ones with others—people I trust: people who rely on God and who are cheerful, practical, and non-hysterical.</p> <p>If I am disturbed it is likely I have made the decision with the wrong counsel (fear, guilt, or anger: not trust in God) or have sought counsel from two sources: both God and fear; and am now confused.</p> <p>I need merely remember I answered the wrong question ('how do I remove the fear or guilt?' 'How do I avenge the anger?')—I must forget the question and ask instead: God, what would you have me do? How I can serve You today?</p>
<p>We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems. We ask especially for freedom from self-will, and are careful to</p>	<p>Meditation—in the language of the Big Book—means concentrated thought, specifically about what happened over the previous 24 hours and what needs correcting, and about what I am going to do over the next</p>

<p>make no request for ourselves only. We may ask for ourselves, however, if others will be helped. We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends. Many of us have wasted a lot of time doing that and it doesn't work. You can easily see why.</p>	<p>24 hours.</p> <p>I can take only one action at a time. I need know for sure only what the next action is. Does that not make life simpler?</p> <p>I stick to praying for three things: power, direction, and the good of all.</p> <p>What is good for me is good for you. What is good for you is good for me. What is bad for you is bad for me. What is bad for you me is bad for you.</p> <p>Appearances in this regard may deceive, and elements of good or bad may be delayed for a long time. Sometimes doing what is right will cause immediate pain, but that can be the cost of long-term benefit.</p> <p>Recovery can be painful; relief is always instant. But relief is sometimes the enemy of recovery.</p> <p>Praying for the good of all is always, therefore, the safest bet.</p>
<p>If circumstances warrant, we ask our wives or friends to join us in morning meditation. If we belong to a religious denomination which requires a definite morning devotion, we attend to that also. If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing. There are many helpful books also. Suggestions about these may be obtained from one's priest, minister, or rabbi. Be quick to see where religious people are right. Make use of what they offer.</p>	<p>If I am to grow spiritually for the rest of my life, I need the direction of those who have gone before me. I would be a fool to disregard such people, particularly since they took the trouble to write down their discoveries and experience.</p> <p>Books I have found particularly useful:</p> <p>One Day At A Time In Al-Anon Anthony de Mello—The Way To Love, Awareness, the Song of the Bird, and Walking on Water (plus other works) Anything by Rabbis Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet Writings of Bill Johnson Writings of Joyce Meyer Writings of Paul Coutinho Writings of Rabbi Harold S. Kushner Writings of C. S. Lewis The teachings of Menachem Mendel Schneerson, compiled by Tzvi Freeman Anything by Charlotte Joko Beck Anything by Andrew Murray Anything by Emmet Fox A Course In Miracles The sermons of Charles H. Spurgeon Hazelden: 'In God's Care' Tales of the Hasidim by Martin Buber 365 Tao The life of Saint Teresa of Ávila, by herself</p> <p>I am sure the list will grow over time.</p>
<p>As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action.</p>	<p>Two things to watch for: agitation and doubt.</p>

<p>We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day 'Thy will be done.' We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves.</p>	<p>Two things to ask for: thought or action = direction and power = sat. nav. and fuel.</p> <p>Whose will? <i>God's will</i>: then relax, because you'll be happier with <i>God's will</i> than that of your ego (and agitation and doubt are both signs that the ego is muscling in).</p> <p>Regarding efficiency: I should not be able to get done in my life what gets done. I will not list everything here, in part because in any case the achievement is <i>God's</i>, not mine; save to say, my schedule and the result do not add up, in purely human terms. And that is the problem: the wasted years of my earlier life (wasted first through drinking and then through my energy being haemorrhaged by fretting) were purely in human terms. Relaxing into <i>God's power</i> has released an energy I did not know was within me and presumably, therefore, is within everyone.</p>
<p>It works—it really does.</p>	<p>Quite.</p>
<p>We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.</p>	<p>Human discipline never works—at least, not for long. My discipline never works—at least, not for long.</p> <p>Submission to <i>God</i>—like diving into a swimming pool or down a water slide—will discipline me better than I can myself.</p> <p>And submission to <i>God</i> is infinite: you never touch the bottom. There is always infinity ahead, whatever is added to behind; infinity plus one is still infinity.</p>