

*The Basics of Recovery*¹*Meditation and Prayer –
The Main Channels to Higher Power**Step Eleven*

*Sought through ‘prayer’ and ‘meditation’ to
improve our conscious contact with God as we
understood Him, praying only for two things*

- (1) *‘knowledge’ of His will for us, and*
- (2) *the ‘power’ to carry that out.*

“Meditation has no boundaries.

It is always an individual adventure.”

“Prayer and meditation are the principle means of our ‘conscious contact’ with God.”

“As recovering people are active, enjoying the satisfactions of dealing with the realities of life, usually for the first time, and strenuously trying to help the next troubled (*obsessive - dependent*) person who begin attending our group. So it isn’t surprising that we often fail to emphasize serious **meditation** and **prayer** as something which is a necessary daily practice for our recovery.

(The Steps We Took, p.96, para. 1, lines 1-2; para. 2, lines 1-6, edited)

“To newcomers and many of the *one-time* agnostics who still cling to this recovery group as their higher power, claims of the *power of prayer* may, (*despite all the experience of the first one-hundred in favor of it*), still be unconvincing or even objectionable. Those of us who once felt that way can certainly understand and sympathize.

(The Steps We Took, p.96, para. 3, lines 1-8; page 97, top, lines 1-6, edited)

“Some of us took a different tack. We liked these twelve recovery Steps all right and were quick to say that they proved to have been miracles for us. But we hesitated with **meditation** and **prayer**. Of course, we finally did experiment, and when unexpected recovery results followed, we became sold on the benefits. It has been said that *‘the only scoffers at the use of meditation are those who never tried it - enough.’*

(The Steps We Took, p.97, para. 1, line 1, & lines 6- 16, edited)

“Those of us who have begun to make regular use of **prayer** would no more do without it than to refuse air, food, or sunshine. And for the same reason. When we refuse air, light, or food, we suffer. And when we turn away from **meditation** and **prayer**, we likewise deprive

our minds, our emotions, and our instincts of vitally needed support. Just as the body can fail its purpose for lack of nourishment, so can the soul. We all need the continuous light of God’s reality, the nourishment of God’s strength, and the presence of God’s grace.”

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.97, para. 2, lines 1- 8; p. 98, top, lines 1-3, edited)

“There is a direct linkage among ‘self-examination’, and **meditation** and **prayer**. Taken regularly, they can bring much relief and benefit. When they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life. Now and then we may be granted the ultimate reality, which is God’s kingdom.

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.98, para. 1, lines 1- 9)

“We desire the ‘good’ that is within all of us (*even the worst of us*) to flower and grow. Most certainly, to grow we shall need bracing clean air and an abundance of food. But first of all we need ‘sunlight’; as nothing much can ‘grow’ in the dark. *Meditation is our Step ‘into the sunlight of the Spirit’.*² How then shall we meditate?

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.98, para. 2, lines 1- 6)

Meditation

“The actual experience of meditation (*and prayer*) over the centuries is, of course, immense. It is hoped that everyone who has a religious connection which emphasizes ‘**meditation**’ will hence forth return to the practice of that devotion as never before. But what of the rest of us less fortunate members, who don’t even know how to begin?

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.98, para. 4, lines 1- 6; P. 99, top, lines 1-2)

“As beginners in meditation, we might now re-read a prayer more slowly, savoring every word and trying to take in the deep meaning of each phrase and idea. It will help if we can drop all resistance to what the prayer says. For in **meditation**, *we are dealing with the conceptual meaning – not the actual words*. Here, word debate has no place. We rest quietly with the thoughts of the author, so that we may experience their meaning and learn from them.”

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.99, para. 1, lines 1- 4, edited)

“The object of **meditation** is always the same: - *to improve our conscious contact with God*, with God’s **grace**, **wisdom**, and **presence**. We should always remember that *meditation* is in reality intensely practical. One of its first fruits is our healthy *emotional balance*. With it, we broaden and deepen the connection between ourselves and God *as we understand Him*.

² A.A., Ch. 5, ‘How It Works’, p.66, para. 1, lines 4-10.

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.101, para. 4, lines 11-14; p. 102, top, lines, 1-3)

Prayer

“Now what of prayer? This is the raising of our heart and our mind to God – and in this sense it includes meditation. We ask simply that throughout our entire day, God will place in us - *the best understanding of ‘His will’* - that we can have for that day, and that we will be given *the grace* through which we can carry out *His will for us.*”

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.102, para. 1, lines 1-3; para. 2, lines, 13-16)

“As each day goes on, we can pause when faced with decisions, and renew this simple request: *‘Thy will, not mine, be done.’* If our emotional disturbance is either high or low, we are then more likely to maintain our balance. Just saying it over and over will often allow us to clear a channel often choked up with anger, fear, frustration, or misunderstanding, and permit us to return to our search for *‘God’s will’*, not ours, in our moment of stress.

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.102, para. 3, line 1; p. 103, top, lines, 1-14)

“In recovery we have found that the unbelievable results of *‘prayer’* are beyond question. They are matters of our actual knowledge and our experience. All of us who have persisted with prayer have found a new strength we did not possess. We have found wisdom beyond our usual capability. And we have increasingly found a peace of mind standing firm in the face of often difficult circumstances.”

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.104, para. 2, lines 1-7)

“Perhaps one of the greatest rewards of meditation and prayer is the sense of ‘belonging’ that comes to all of us. We are no longer lost, or frightened, and purposeless. The moment we catch even a glimpse of *‘God’s will’*, we begin to see truth, justice and love as the real and eternal things of life. We are no longer disturbed by all the seeming evidence to the contrary which surrounds our human affairs. We know that a loving God watches over each of us. When we turn to God, all is well, here, now, and hereafter.”

(Twelve Steps And Twelve Traditions, p.105, para. 2, lines 1-11)

Alcoholics Anonymous

“We...are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a...hopeless (condition) of mind (obsession) and body (physical allergy³). To show

3 “Allergy”- a abnormal physical reaction of the body.” “We believe, and so suggested a few years ago, that the action of this behavior, is a

(others) precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.”

(A.A., Forward To The First Edition, p. ix, para. 1, lines 1-5)

The ‘Big Book’ directions for completing:

Step Eleven⁴

Sought through ‘prayer’ and ‘meditation’ to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood (God), praying only for ‘knowledge’ of (God’s) will for us and the ‘power’ to carry that out.

“The Actual results of prayer are beyond question”.

The ‘moral principle’ we practice daily, which is co-aligned with Step Eleven, is *‘Spirituality’*. Defined as:

Def: *‘A predominately ‘spiritual character’ as shown in our thought, our life, our tendency and our tone.’*

“This is the Step we prepared ourselves for last week. Now we will examine *‘prayer and meditation’* in more detail. Then we will look at the *‘guidance’* we have received during the past week.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p. 74, para. 1, lines 1-5)

“The description of Step Eleven and the directions for completing it are found on pages 85 through 88 of our book. The authors ask us to complete this prayer and meditation Step continuously on a regular, daily basis.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p. 74, para. 2, lines 1-3)

We begin on page 85, the last paragraph:

“Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn’t be shy on this matter of prayer. Better people than we are using it constantly. It works, ‘if’ (1) we have the proper attitude and (2) we ‘work’ at it.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 85, para. 3, lines 1-2; p. 86, lines 1-5)

The authors state that it is both prayer and meditation which places us in direct contact with a *Power greater than ourselves* – and that power will actually *solve our problem for us*. They next provide us with some valuable details on how they completed this Step.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.74, para.5, lines 1-4)

manifesta- tion of an allergy that the phenomenon of craving is limited to this class and never occurs in the average temperate ‘thinker’.” (A.A. . p. xxiv, para. 1, lines 1-5)

4 Step Eleven is described in Chapter 6 “Into Action”, on pages 85-88. The directions for taking Step Eleven are found on page 86, para. 1, lines 1-14; para. 2, lines 1-5; and para. 3, lines 1-6.

On page 86, the second line down:

~~the proper attitude and work at it.~~ “It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some **‘definite’** and **‘valuable’ ‘suggestions’**.⁵

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, top, lines 2-4)

There are Four **‘Definite’** and **‘Valuable’** Suggestions:

“The Big Book authors provide us with four **‘step-by-step’ ‘instructions’** on ‘how to practice **‘two-way’** prayer’. They tell us what to do **‘at night’**, in **‘the morning’**, **‘during the day’**, and when facing **‘indecision’**’.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.75, para.1, lines 1-3)

1. **At NIGHT** (the first suggestion):
we review the day’s activities.

Again on page 86, the first paragraph:

“When we **‘retire at night’**, we constructively review our day. Were we **resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?**. Do we owe an **apology?** Have we kept something to ourselves which **should be discussed with another person at once?** Were we **kind and loving** toward all? What could we have done better? Were we **‘thinking’ of ‘ourselves’ most of the time?** Or were we **‘thinking’ of what we could do for others**, of what we could pack into the (spiritual) stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into **worry, remorse or morbid reflection**, for that would **diminish our usefulness to others.**”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, para. 1, lines 1-12)

“This paragraph contains the third reference to the A.A. test for **‘self’-will**. The ‘Big Book’ authors once again have made minor changes to the **‘test’** they presented to us in the Fourth and Fifth Step”.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.75, para.4, lines 1-5)

The A.A. ‘test’ for **‘self’-will**.

Selfish, Dishonest, Resentful, or Afraid (Fear)

Note: (on p.69 the author’s added - **Inconsiderate.**)

We use this same inventory ‘test’ during our **‘morning’** meditation, to also check for the presence **‘guidance’**.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.75, para.6, line 1; p. 76, top line 1)

Continuing in the same paragraph, the authors then suggest how we should conclude our **‘nightly review’**:

⁵ “Our Book is ment to be **‘suggestive only’**. We realize we know only a little.”

(A.A., ‘A Vision For You’, Page 164, para. 2, lines, 1-2)

~~ness-to-others.~~ “After making our **‘review’** we ask God’s **‘forgiveness’**⁶ and **inquire what ‘corrective measures’** should be taken.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, para. 1, lines 12-14)

(Please read footnote 9 on ‘forgiveness’)

2. **In the MORNING** (the second suggestion):

- we consider our plans for the day.

Next, the **authors** provide us with directions for practicing a daily **‘quiet time.’**

On page 86, the second paragraph:

“**On awakening** let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We **consider** our plans for the day. Before we begin...

The Eleventh Step Prayer

“We ask God to direct our **‘thinking’**, especially asking that it be divorced from **‘self’-pity, ‘dishonest’ or ‘self’-seeking motives.**”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, para. 2, lines 1-5)

“Let’s look at the third sentence again, beginning with **‘Before we begin, we ask God to direct our ‘thinking’**. Please take a moment to consider these words—they are critical. ‘Before we begin what? Before we begin **‘listening to God’**. How do we know that we are supposed to **listen to God?** Because right afterward the authors say, **‘We asked God to direct our thinking.’** If we ask God to direct our **‘thinking’**, doesn’t it stand to reason that our next **‘thoughts’**, or **‘feelings’** just might be of a **‘spiritual’** nature? What do we do with these **‘spiritual’** thoughts? We write them down, so we won’t forget them.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.76, para.3, lines 1-10)

“After we write down our **thoughts** and **feelings**, we test them to determine the source. We do this because everything we **‘think’** is not from the **Indwelling Spirit**. Some of the messages may be our ego at work. However, with time and practice we will begin to trust what the authors describe last week, as **‘our vital sixth sense’** and we are able to separate the **‘spiritual’** from the **‘ego-centric’**’.

Next, the authors assure us, under God’s direction our **‘thought-life’** will be on a much higher plane.

⁶ “If we are sorry for what we have done and have the honest desire to God take us to better thing, we believe we will be forgiven, and will have learned our lesson.”

(A.A. How It Works, p. 70, para. 1, lines 4-7)

On page 86, the same paragraph, fifth line down:

~~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.*”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, para. 2, lines 5-9)

“The authors are emphatic that all of our questions will be answered. They now reveal how the ‘*God consciousness within*’ is going to respond to our request for help.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.77, para.2, lines 1-4)

3. Facing INDECISION (the third suggestion): if we are uncertain of decisions we need to make.

On page 86, the last paragraph:

“In thinking about our day we may face ‘*indecision*’. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for *inspiration*, an *intuitive thought* or a *decision*. We relax and take it easy. *We don’t struggle*. We are often surprised how the ‘*right answers*’ come after we have tried this for a while.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 86, para. 3, lines 1-6)

“According to the ‘Big Book’ authors, God is going to communicate with us through ‘*inspiration*, an *intuitive thought* or a *decision*’. If the ‘*One who has all power*’ is going to provide us with ‘the right answers,’ wouldn’t it be a good idea to write them down, so we don’t forget them?”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.77, para.4, lines 1-4; p. 78, line 1)

4. INSPIRATION (the fourth suggestion): how we access occasional inspiration.

On the top of page 87, the first sentence:

“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. (Note: We are always ‘*inspired*’ when God is *Present*).

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 87, top, lines 1-9)

“Please note the change in the tempo of our book. Here the authors write, ‘*gradually*’ and ‘*as time passes*’. They are emphasizing that this part of the recovery program is on-going; it takes practice, more practice, and still more practice.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.77, para.1, lines 1-4)

“We end our ‘prayer and meditation’ period by asking God’s guidance during our daily activities.

On page 87, the first indented paragraph:

(Please read the *red numbers*)

“We usually conclude the ‘*period of meditation*’ with a *prayer* (1) that we be *shown* all through the day *what our next step is to be*, (2) that we be *given whatever we need* to take care of such ‘*problems*’. (3) We ask especially for *freedom from ‘self’-will* and (4) are careful to make *no request for our-‘selves’ 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.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 87, para.1, lines 1-10)

“The ‘Big Book’ authors then describe what to do anytime we become troubled or confused. They tell us to relax *within Him*, and ask for further ‘*guidance*’.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.78, para.3, lines 1-3)

On page 87, the last paragraph, bottom of the page:

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

The Energy Prayer

“Thy will (not mine) be done.”

We are ‘*then*’ in much less danger of ‘*excitement*’, ‘*fear*’, ‘*anger*’, ‘*worry*’, ‘*self-pity*’, or ‘*foolish decisions*’. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up ‘*energy*’ foolishly as we did *when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves*.”

It works - it really does.

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 87, para.3, lines 1-3; p. 88, lines 1-7; para. 1, line 1)

“This is an ironclad guarantee from *the first one hundred*. **‘It works!’** from first-hand experience we (the authors and the recovered people in this group) can state that two-way prayer has been working in our lives ever since we began our daily *‘quiet time’* practice.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.79, para.1, lines 1-3)

“But what if we don’t receive any God-given thoughts, images or feelings? Let us assure you this can happen any time. Remember, the only thing *‘we have is a daily **reprieve**, contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition.’* If we don’t feel *‘the Presence of God’* in our lives, it means we have more work to do. Maybe we’ve taken back *‘self-will’* in some area of our lives, or maybe we haven’t made a necessary *‘amends’*. If this is the case, we take the corrective actions that will *‘re-connect’* us to the **‘One who has all power’**.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.79, para.2, lines 1-9)

“The ‘Big Book’ authors state, once again, that all of us (each one of us) need God’s Presence.

On page 88, the second paragraph:

“We (the authors, and members of this Step group) are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 88, para.2, lines 1-2)

“In order for two-way prayer to be effective, we must continually practice the *Presence of God*. If we do the work, we will receive the rewards: a life filled with **‘power, peace, happiness, and a new sense of direction’**.”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.79, para.6, lines 1-4)

“We are now going to take a few-minutes ‘quiet time’ so each of us can make contact with the **‘Spirit of the Universe’** and receive divine guidance right here and right now. Please capture on your fingertips any thoughts, images or feelings you receive during this period of silence.

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.79, para.6, lines 1-4)

[Minutes of silence]

“Thank you. As we mentioned earlier, ‘guidance’ can consist of thoughts, images, sounds, or feelings. We realize these messages can be very personal and are normally discussed with only your sharing partner. However, if you believe the group can benefit from a thought you have received, we ask that you consider sharing it with us now. In addition, you will be helping those who are still struggling with the Eleventh Step to

see how ‘God constantly disclose(s) more to you and to us.’”

(Back To the Basics of Recovery, p.80, para.2, lines 1-8)

“Who is willing to share what they have captured on their fingertips?

[Five-minute group discussion]

Thank you. Whether you have shared your guidance or listened to others share their guidance, you have now completed Step Eleven. Congratulations! But:

On page 88, the last paragraph:

“But this is not all. There is action and more action. **“Faith without works is dead.”** The next chapter (‘Working With Others’) is entirely devoted to Step Twelve.”

(A.A., Ch. 6, ‘Into Action’, p. 88, para.2, lines 1-2; para. 3, lines 1-2)

This concludes the Big Book preparation for Step Eleven.

Word Count: = 4,300

Let’s close with God’s blessing.

‘Homework ‘Suggestions’:

Re-read and highlight your ‘Big Book’ per this Eleventh Step Study Guide.

Ask your spouse or ‘significant other’ to review your highlights, hold your hand, and answer all four of the Eleventh Step questions together.

A.A.’s tradition of written Guidance

Much of the Oxford Group literature which was used to write the Big Book contains references to written guidance. Their pamphlet titled **‘What is The Oxford Group?’** illustrates the value of writing down what we hear during our morning meditation.”

(Back to Basics, p.133, para.2, lines 1-6)

“The Group advocates our use of a pencil and notebook so that we may record *‘every God-given thought’* that comes to us *during* our *‘quiet time’* alone with Him. No detail, however small, should be lost to us, that we do not shrink from the **‘truth’** about ourselves or any problem when it comes to us.”

(What Is The Oxford Group, p.68, para.1, lines 6-12)

(Please copy this critical ‘suggestion’ and paste it to the reverse side of your 3x5 note card)

Definitions we find helpful:

Dependency:

“Self-defeating, learned behaviors, which are greatly exaggerated and complicated by a pathological *(caused by a mentally disturbed condition)* relationship to a mood-altering **substance, activity, or person**, that diminishes our capacity to participate in loving relationships.”

Ernie Larson

God (Good):

“A **‘power’** behind our nature; our creation, and our health; which allows us aspire to the highest level of **moral action and ethical behavior**; or, the underlying *‘principal of goodness’* that lies deep within each of us.”

R. Mordecai Kaplan, JTS

Moral:

“Concerned with, or founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct, virtuous; chaste.”

(Please copy these definitions of God and Moral action on page 16 of your book)

The books we use in our Step Group:

Alcoholics Anonymous

“The Big Book”

Pocketbook (Recovery Portion -164 pages)

Fourth Edition, first published in 1939

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

New York, New York 2001

This book can be purchased on line or locally at:

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7204 27th Street, Ste. 113

St. Louis Park, MN 55426

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Back to the Basics of Recovery

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