

Session #4 – Steps 10, 11 & 12

This is our fourth session back to the Fall of 1946 and the A.A. Beginners' Meetings with a twist of O.A. During this session, we will spend much of our time sharing the results of our two-way communication with the God of our understanding. We will experience the life changing spiritual awakening that occurs as we move from a "life run on self-will" to a life guided by "the vision of God's will."

We have demystified the Twelve Steps of AA and shown you just how simple this program truly is. For those of you who will be completing your Steps today, we congratulate you for your efforts and we welcome you to the "sunlight of the Spirit."

Please remember that, in order to remain spiritually fit, we must be of service to other food addicts. We can think of no greater service than helping others through the Twelve Steps so that they too, can find the spiritual solution to food addiction.

It is essential that we never forget that recovery is an ongoing process. We don't just take the Steps once and then "rest on our laurels." Remember, "food addiction is a subtle foe." We must repeat the process again and again in order to remain in a fit spiritual condition.

We are sure you will gain additional insight into the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous and continue to enhance your relationship with the "One who has all power."

WELCOME to the fourth of the one-hour Newcomers Step Workshop Meetings. This is the payoff. This is what we have been waiting for—to recover from the seemingly hopeless state of mind and body known as food addiction. By completing the Twelve Steps, you will experience the spiritual awakening that will change your life forever.

Our names are _____ and _____ and we are members of OA. It is a pleasure to be a part of this life changing process—to watch people grow spiritually right before our very eyes.

Let's see who's ready to be rocketed into the fourth dimension of existence that the "Big Book" authors write about. Will all who have completed Steps One through Eight and are working on their Ninth Step amends, please so indicate.

Congratulations. You are the ones who are in the process of experiencing the personality change sufficient to recover from food addiction. Thank you.

We are so happy you have chosen to live, especially when so many food addicts would rather die than accept the spiritual solution to food addiction.

You have chosen to let God direct your lives. Let's see what we need to do in order to maintain and expand this new God consciousness. Basically, we need to live the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Steps, on a daily basis. Let's start with Step Ten.

Step 10

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

In Steps One through Three, we made the decisions that put us on the spiritual path. In Steps Four through Nine, we took the actions necessary to remove those things which had separated us from God. Now, we're ready to grow into the promised Spiritual Awakening.

Step Ten is a summary of Steps Four through Nine. Step Eleven shows us how to establish and maintain a conscious contact with the God of our understanding. Step Twelve tells us how to carry our life changing message to others.

The key to Step Ten are the words continued to take personal inventory. In the middle of page 84, paragraph two, the “Big Book” authors emphasize the importance of continuing to take the steps:

“This...brings us to Step Ten, which suggests we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along. We vigorously commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past. We have entered the world of the Spirit. Our next function is to grow in understanding and effectiveness. This is not an overnight matter. It should continue for a lifetime.”

In this paragraph, the authors tell us how to live, one day at a time. We call this our twenty-four-hour plan. We continue to take inventory, continue to make amends and continue to help others, every day.

Let's look at the third sentence in this paragraph again. It is very important. It reads, “We have entered the world of the Spirit.”

This sentence contains an amazing revelation. Basically, the “Big Book” authors have just informed us that our lives have already changed as a result of taking Steps One through Nine. They state that we have already had a spiritual awakening.

How could that be? Well, it's very simple. There is no way a newcomer can get through these Steps alone. You have not only developed a belief in a God of your understanding, but you have come to rely upon this Power to help you through the inventory and restitution process. You are now living in the solution. Some of you may not realize it yet, but the “psychic change” has already occurred.

Further down on page 84, paragraph two, the authors tell us precisely how to take a Tenth Step inventory:

“...Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code.”

In this paragraph, they describe the O.A. test for self-will a second time. Earlier, we discussed the test as described within the Fourth Step—Selfish(ness), Dishonest(y), Self-seeking and Frightened. Within the Tenth Step, the authors present the same test with only minor variations—Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear.

The authors even provide us with specific instructions on how to rid ourselves of these self-centered behaviors. First, we must realize they are not consistent with God’s plan for our lives. Next, we must take the actions necessary to move from self-will to God’s will. We ask God to remove these shortcomings, we discuss them with our “sponsor” or spiritual advisor, and if necessary, we make restitution. Then, we try to help someone else.

The “Big Book” authors affirm that if we apply the O.A. test for self-will on a daily basis, God will remove the OUR obsession. This is another of the many promises we find throughout the text of the book. At the bottom of page 84, paragraph three, they write:

“And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any effort on our part. It just comes! This is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality—safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us. We are neither cocky nor are we afraid. That is our experience. That is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.”

How do we keep in fit spiritual condition? By taking a daily inventory. What is our reward? A daily reprieve.

The “Big Book” authors describe this daily reprieve in the middle of page 85, paragraph 1:

“It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. How can I best serve Thee—thy will (not mine) be done.”

Another reward is God Consciousness—direct contact with the “Spirit of the Universe.” In the next paragraph on page 85, the “Big Book” authors tell us:

“Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power. If we have carefully followed directions, we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us. To some extent we have become God-conscious. We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense. But we must go further and that means more action.”

Once again, the authors declare that our lives have changed—we’ve already had the spiritual awakening. They say we have become conscious of the Spirit of the Universe, and we are now receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from this Spirit.

Now, it’s time to find out who is ready to proceed. The directions for taking the Tenth Step are found in the second paragraph on page 84. Starting with line two, the “Big Book” authors write”

“...we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along.”

Will those who completed the first Eight Steps and are working on their Ninth Step amends please so indicate. This is the Tenth Step question.

Will you continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right away any new mistakes as you go along?

Please answer, one at a time, yes or no.

[Have each newcomer answer the question.]

Thank you.

All of you who answered yes to this question have completed Step Ten.

Now, let’s move on to the Eleventh Step.

Step 11

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.

This is the Step we prepared for last session. We will examine it in more detail, and then we are going to look at the guidance we will have received during this session.

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

At the bottom of page 85, we find:

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

What do the authors mean when they say "it works?" In essence, they're telling us that prayer and meditation put us in contact with our Creator. Hopefully that's what we've been doing—making conscious contact with the God of our understanding.

Then at the top of page 86, lines 2-4, they make the statement:

"...It would be easy to be vague about this matter. Yet, we believe we can make some definite and valuable suggestions."

At night, they suggest we review the day's activities. Once again, the first paragraph on page 86, they ask us to use the A.A. test for self-will to judge our actions:

"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 stream of life?"

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 Tenth Steps. Nevertheless, it is still the opposite of the Oxford Group test for God's will:

The Alcoholics Anonymous

Test for self-will

Resentful

Selfish(ness)

Dishonest(y)

Afraid (or Fear)

The Oxford Group

Test for God's will

Purity

Unselfishness

Honesty

Love

This is the same test we will use during our morning meditation.

Upon awakening, we are asked to practice the equivalent of the Oxford Group technique of “Quiet Time” and “Guidance.” Much of the material in this section of the “Big Book” came directly from their text book titled What is the Oxford Group? This book was written anonymously in 1933, six years before the “Big Book.”

Since Bill W., Dr. Bob and most of the “Big Book” authors were members of the Oxford Group, we are going to reference the same material they used to write the Eleventh Step. Hopefully this information will make it easier for you to establish a conscious contact with the God of your understanding.

In What is the Oxford Group?, there is an entire chapter devoted to “Guidance.” Oxford Group members conduct a morning meditation every day:

“A Quiet Time with the Holy Spirit every morning before ‘the daily toil and common round’ of the world commences will put us in the right key for the day. These early morning Quiet Times in which God impresses on our minds His counsel become living spots in the routine of ordinary life.” (What is the Oxford Group?, page 68, para. 1, lines 1-6)

What does the “Big Book” tell us? Precisely the same thing. In the middle of page 86, paragraph two, we find:

“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.”

So, both books tell us to meditate first thing in the morning.

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

The Oxford Group tells us what to do when we receive these thoughts—we write them down! Although this action is not specifically mentioned in the "Big Book," it is an essential part of the meditation process. This is what the Oxford Group book says:

"The Oxford Group advocates our use of a pencil and note-book so that we may record every God-given thought and idea that comes to us during our time alone with Him, that no detail, however small, may be lost to us and that we may not shirk the truth about ourselves or any problem, when it comes to us." (What is the Oxford Group?, page 68, para. 1, lines 6-12)

As does the Oxford Group, the "Big Book" authors tell us to test our thoughts. Not all of them come from God. But, with the time and practice, we begin to rely upon these thoughts. On the top of page 87, they write:

"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."

To protect ourselves from absurd actions and ideas, the "Big Book" authors tell us we need to test our thoughts. In December 1934, Bill W. was instructed to test his thoughts and actions using the principles of the Oxford Group. In the fourth paragraph on page 13 of his story, Bill exclaims:

"I was to test my thinking by the new God-consciousness within. Common sense would thus become uncommon sense."

The authors explain to us on page 69 that we need to test our thoughts and actions to separate self-will from God's will. Starting with line two in the second paragraph, they write:

"We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us live up to them."

What test do the “Big Book” authors recommend? They ask us to check for selfishness, which is one of the components of the A.A. test for self-will.

So, whether you use the Oxford Group test for God’s will, which is Honesty, Purity, Unselfishness and Love, or the A.A. test for self-will, which is Selfishness, Dishonesty, Resentment and Fear, you need to analyze what you have written during your morning meditation.

Here’s how it works. When you finish your morning meditation or “Quiet Time,” check what you have written. If what you have put on paper is Honest, Pure, Unselfish and Loving, you can be assured those thoughts have come from God. Conversely, if what you have written is Selfish, Dishonest, Resentful or Fearful, you can be equally assured those thoughts have come from self.

The authors insist that our Creator will provide us with the answers to all of our questions. They even disclose how the Spirit of the Universe is going to answer our requests for help. At the bottom of page 86, paragraph three, they write:

“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.”

So, God is going to tell us God’s plan for our lives in the form of inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision. If God is going to provide us with directions on how to live, don’t you think it’s a good idea to write down the directions so we don’t forget them?

Starting with the last line on page 87, the “Big Book” authors tell us we must get out of self-will in order to learn God’s plan for our lives:

“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.”

“It works—it really does.”

This is an ironclad guarantee. It works! From first-hand experience, we can state that guidance has been working in our lives ever since we began a daily “Quiet Time.”

But, what if we don't receive any God given thoughts or guidance? Let us assure you, this can happen at any time. Remember, all "we really have is a daily reprieve contingent upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition." If we don't receive any guidance, it means we have work to do. Maybe we've taken back our will in some area of our lives, or, maybe we haven't made a necessary amends. If this is the case, we need to take the actions necessary to re-establish our connection with our Creator. In the second paragraph on page 88, they tell us, once again, we need God's help:

"We alcoholics are undisciplined. So, we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined."

"But this is not all. There is action and more action. Faith without works is dead."

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

We will conclude our discussion of the Eleventh Step with a moment of silence so each of us can make contact with the Spirit of the Universe and receive Divine guidance right now. At this time, we ask you to meditate and write down the guidance you receive. [Five minutes]

[A moment of silence]

Thank you. We realize this is a very personal matter and that your guidance is normally shared with only one other individual who is in two-way communication with God. But, we are asking you to share what you have written with the Group in order to demonstrate, to those who may still be skeptical, that God really does "disclose itself to us."

Who's willing to share what they have written?

[For the next 10-20 minutes, have "sponsors" and newcomers share their guidance.]

Thank you. Now, let's move on to the Twelfth Step.

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other food addicts, and to practice these principles in our lives.

Now that we've made conscious contact with the God of our understanding, we have received the greatest gift of this program—a spiritual awakening. God is now guiding us in such a way that it is indeed miraculous.

This life changing experience comes suddenly to some, gradually to others. Let's see what else we can learn about this miraculous event.

Please turn once again to Appendix II on page 569. This appendix was written after the publication of the first printing of the “Big Book” in 1939. In the first printing, the Twelfth Step read:

“Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps...”

In the two years between the first and second printings, the word “experience” was discussed at length. Eventually the word “experience” was replaced with the word “awakening.” The “Big Book” authors made this modification in order to include those whose lives had truly changed but more slowly over a period of time.

Many of you will find this to be the case also. Your life has changed, but gradually rather than suddenly. You may not be able to point to a specific experience that brought about the change, but the spiritual awakening has occurred nonetheless.

At the top of page 569, the authors define the term “spiritual awakening:”

“The terms “spiritual experience” and “spiritual awakening” are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.”

“Yet it is true our first printing gave many readers the impression that these personality changes, or religious experiences, must be in the nature of sudden and spectacular upheavals. Happily, for everyone, this conclusion is erroneous.”

A spiritual awakening is nothing more than a psychic change that, among other things, eliminates our obsession to act out destructive food behaviors.

So, Bill W.’s rapid conversion experience at Towns Hospital is the exception rather than the rule. Further down on page 569, paragraph four, we find the description of a more gradual spiritual experience:

“Among our rapidly growing membership of thousands of alcoholics such transformations, though frequent, are by no means the rule. Most of our experiences are what the psychologist William James calls the “educational variety” because they develop slowly over a period of time. Quite often friends of the newcomer are aware of the difference long before he is himself. He finally realizes that he has undergone a profound alteration in his reaction to life; that such a change could hardly have been brought about by himself alone. What often takes place in a few months could seldom have been accomplished by years of self-discipline. With few exceptions, our members find that they have tapped an unsuspected inner resource which they presently identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves.”

As we read the next lines of page 570, we learn just how easy it is to have a spiritual awakening:

“Most of us think this awareness of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience. Our more religious members call it “God-consciousness.”

That's all there is to it. If you've made contact with the God of your understanding and you have started listening to guidance, you have in fact, already had the spiritual awakening.

Congratulations. You are now living in the “sunlight of the Spirit.”

But, the spiritual awakening is just the first part of the Twelfth Step. Let's look at what we have to do to sustain this spiritual transformation.

On page 89, chapter 7, in its entirety is devoted to carrying the message of Overeaters Anonymous to others. At the top of page 89, the “Big Book” authors tell us what we must do to enlarge our new God-consciousness:

“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 others fail.”

When we work with others, our lives change. In the second paragraph on page 89, the authors state:

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

On page 89 through 103, the authors provide us with specific instructions on how to carry our lifesaving message of recovery to others. They offer many valuable suggestions on these pages. For now, we are only going to cover a few of them.

At the top of page 90, they start with the following advice:

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

In the middle of page 91, paragraph three, the “Big Book” authors even provide us with specifics on what to say. First, we tell the prospect our story:

“See your man alone, if possible. At first engage in general conversation. After a while, turn the talk to some phase of drinking. Tell him enough about your drinking habits, symptoms, and experiences to encourage him to speak of himself. If he wishes to talk, let him do so. You will thus get a better idea of how you ought to proceed.”

See how easy it is. For the next several pages we are provided additional suggestions on what to say and not to say—what to do and not to do during our Twelfth Step calls. On page 96, paragraph one, the authors write:

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

In the middle of the first paragraph on page 98, they tell us what to do about the person who makes one excuse after another as to why he or she can’t stop acting on one’s addiction:

“He clamors for this or that, claiming he cannot master alcohol until his material needs are cared for. Nonsense. Some of us have taken very hard knocks to learn this truth: Job or no job—wife or no wife—we simply do not stop drinking so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of dependence on God.”

“Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone. The only condition is that he trust in God and clean house.”

How much simpler can it get? Trust God and Clean House!

In the first paragraph on page 100, the “Big Book” authors tell us we grow spiritually when we “sponsor” someone else into the fellowship:

“Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress. If you persist, remarkable things will happen. When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God’s hands were better than anything we could have planned. Follow the dictates of a Higher Power and you will presently live in a new and wonderful world, no matter what your present circumstances!”

God is our “new Employer.” In the second paragraph on page 102, the authors even give us a new job description.

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

This completes the Twelfth Step as described in the “Big Book.”

Being of service to others is critical to the continued growth and the maintenance of our sobriety. Keep in mind that one of the primary services we can perform is to take prospective members through the Twelve Steps in these Beginners’ Meetings. Each time we do this, we learn more about this lifesaving program and gain additional insight into the Divine inspiration that is the heart of our new way of life.

Who knows, maybe in a couple of months, some of you will be back to lead these sessions. As we have discovered, conducting these Beginners’ Meetings is a real test of how well we know the “Big Book” of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Now all that’s left is to practice these principles in all our lives. What principles?—The Twelve Steps! They are the principles we practice daily for the rest of our lives.

On page 164, paragraph two, the “Big Book” authors conclude with yet one more statement concerning the importance of Divine guidance and the necessity of working with others:

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

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

“May God bless you and keep you—until then.”

We are going to close this session by reading part of page 25, paragraphs one and two, from the “Big Book.” We have waited until now to share this page with you because back when we started this journey, you may not have understood the significance of what is written here. Having completed the Twelve Steps and having had a Spiritual Awakening, you are now in a position to see the words from an entirely new perspective. Your life has changed. You now realize, *“There is a Solution.”*

“...Almost none of us like the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires for its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as we had been living it. 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. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into the fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.”

“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. The central fact of our lives today is the absolute certainty that our Creator has entered into our hearts and lives in a way is indeed miraculous. He has commenced to accomplish those things for us which we could never do by ourselves.”

We want to welcome each of you who have completed the Twelve Steps to the “fourth dimension of existence.” We thank you for providing us the opportunity to be your guides for this miraculous spiritual journey.

Are there any questions?

[Close with the Serenity Prayer]