

WEEK #19: Chapter 7 — WORKING WITH OTHERS (*Step Twelve*)

READ: Page 89, through 103

"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."

Let's look at Step Twelve for just a moment. There are three parts to Step Twelve. The *first* part of Step Twelve is probably the greatest promise to be found anywhere in *The Big Book*: ***"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..."***

I think that is a promise to me if I will put the first eleven Steps to work in my life to the best of my ability, then I can have a spiritual awakening.

What is a spiritual awakening? *A personality change sufficient to recover from alcoholism.* Bill tells us in *The Twelve and Twelve* there are as many different kinds of "spiritual awakenings" as there are people in A.A. But, people who have had a spiritual awakening all have certain things in common, that is, they are able to *feel, believe, and do* things that they could never do before on their own strength unaided. Now if that is the criteria for a spiritual awakening, then I believe I must have had one of some kind because I certainly feel things that I never felt before.

Today I *feel* true love. I never knew what love was. I always had love mixed up with sex and things like that. Today I realize that doesn't have anything to do with love. Love is compassion, tolerance, patience, and goodwill towards my fellow man. Today I feel some of that. Before AA I never felt any of that and I could have cared less about you. You could have some after I got what I wanted, but I was going to get mine first every time. Those feelings have changed. So, if that's the criteria, then surely I've had some form of spiritual awakening.

Today I *believe* things I never believed before. I believe God is a kind and a loving God. I believe He stands ready to help any human being anywhere in the world the instant they are ready to give self-will back to Him and begin to follow His will. Before, I always thought He was hellfire and brimstone. **I believe God disciplines us.** Sometimes we are so hard headed that it takes a big blow to us to get our attention. But I think we are the ones that punish ourselves, not God, but, we blame Him for how we feel. My belief about God has changed entirely. So, if that's the criteria, then surely I've had some form of spiritual awakening.

Today I can *do* things that I couldn't do before I came to A.A. I can stay sober. I could never do that before, and because of the fact that I'm sober, I'm allowed to do many, many things I could never do while I was drinking. So, if that's the criteria, then surely I've had some form of spiritual awakening.

Now, let's look at the *second* part of Step Twelve:

"...we tried to carry this message..."

What am I supposed to do with it? Not a message, not the message, not some message, but **this** message to others. What is **this** message? Very simple...*"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps..."*

That's the **only** message that we carry to other people. Sometimes we get to thinking we're healers in A.A. Or we get to thinking we're marital advisors, economic advisors, sex advisors. I don't know of any group of people in the world that screwed that mess up worse than we did, yet we think we can advise other people in those areas. We only know one thing. But I'll guarantee you, that one thing we know, we know better than anybody in the world and that is: ***An alcoholic armed with the facts about himself can help another alcoholic learn about the disease of alcoholism.*** We know more about it than anybody alive, because we are the only people in the world who have experienced the disease of alcoholism. Same thing with the **recovery** process... we are the only people in the world who have experienced the *recovery* from the disease of alcoholism.

Now we can take that very unique knowledge and carry that to another human being and help them understand what their problem is: *the disease of alcoholism*. Help them understand what their solution will need to be: a vital spiritual experience. Help them walk through the program of action, so they also can have a spiritual awakening and recover from their disease. *We are the only people in the world who can do this.*

I've got to believe that in the 1930's God got tired of seeing people like us die. He had to take Bill and Bob and Ebbie and Dr. Jung and Dr. Silkworth and the Oxford Group and all the others concerned and put this thing together. *God has always worked with people, through people.* Very seldom does He speak to one of us directly. (We've got one back home who says he does, but he won't give anyone else God's telephone number, he's keeping it for himself.) If God worked through people in the 1930's to set this up, and now they're all dead, it stands to reason that He will work with people today and through people to continue to carry this message to those who are still suffering. There's no alcoholic in this room that shouldn't be dead. How many times did we wake up the next morning and say, weren't we lucky the night before? I don't think luck had anything to do with it. I think we are a **chosen people**. Not as a race, but, **to do a job**.

They tell me today that 96-97% of the alcoholics that are alive today will die from their disease, never even knowing that they are alcoholics. Three or four percent of us manage to stagger into A.A. and less than 25% of that three or four percent of us are recovering, so we are talking about one out of one hundred have recovered from this disease. I used to say, "God, why am I an alcoholic? Today I say, "God, why am I not one of those dying from the disease?" I don't have any trouble with God's will. I don't think God is concerned with where I work. I don't think He's concerned with where I live. I doubt whether He's concerned with whom I'm married to, in any great extent. But, I think there is one thing God is concerned with: *"What are you doing with what I've given so freely?"* If we can take this unique knowledge that we have, then you and I together, can avert death in countless thousands and thousands of people. Not many people in this world have that privilege. I think we are very unique. I think we are very, very lucky individuals.

The third and last part of Step Twelve says:

"...to practice these principles in all our affairs"

Well, what are the *principles*? We've heard arguments go on for hours about this, just like the difference between a defect and a shortcoming and a wrong. In the chapter "How It Works", Bill said: *"No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints (Bill says) the principles we have set down are guides to spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection."*

What did he set down just before that statement? ***The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous***
In the Forward of *The Twelve and Twelve* he says: "*The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are a set of principles, spiritual in nature, which if practiced will expel the obsession to drink.*"
I have never yet seen Bill write about the principles except when it was in connection with:

The Twelve Steps... THEY ARE A SET OF PRINCIPLES

Now it's easy for me to *practice* them here in AA. I love you and you love me and we're going to do our best not to hurt each other. And through practicing these principles here in AA, that hour a day we're in AA we can be happy, peaceful, and free. But what do we do with the other 23 hours a day? If I practice these principles in my own home, where I am 10-12 hours a day, and I *practice* these principles with my spouse, I realize how powerless I am over her. I realize the insanity of this. She is mature... she's not going to listen to me anymore at all. I make a decision to turn her will and her life over to the care of God, as I understand Him. And I inventory *me* to see why I still have the need to control her, I find those defects of character that cause this, and I talk it over with another human being and I ask God to take them away. I make amends quickly to her when I have harmed her. There are times I'm really ashamed of me. There are times I treat absolute strangers with more courtesy than I treat my own spouse in my home. If I *practice these principles in my home with her*, I could be happy, peaceful and serene another 8-10 hours a day.

How about my children? Can I realize how powerless I am over them? Can I realize the insanity of me trying to control their lives for them? They're not going to listen to daddy anymore. Can I make a decision to turn their will and their lives over to the care of God, as I understand Him? Can I inventory me and see why I need to control them? Can I find those defects and do something about it? Can I make amends quickly when I smart off to them once in a while? If I could practice these principles with my children, I could be happy when I'm with them. If I don't, I don't stand a chance with them. All we will do is argue and fight from then on. If I can practice them with my kids, I can be happy there another hour or two a day.

How about on the Job? Can I see how powerless I am over my coworkers? Do I realize the insanity of me trying to control them? Can I make that decision? If I can do this on the job, then I could be happy there another 8 to 9 hours a day. We're down to about 23 hours now.

I have one hour left. How about the supermarket check-out line? I'm in the express line. I've got three items. There's a little old lady in front of me with her whole basket full. She has about 50 things in there. She shouldn't be in this damn line anyway. She needs to be over there. I'm in a hurry and I want to get through here. It takes them about 10 or 15 minutes to add up her bill, and I'm in a hurry and I want to get through here and she shouldn't be in this line in the first place. Then after they add up the bill, she pulls out her coupons. It takes another 10 minutes to add up her bill again and I'm in a hurry and she shouldn't be in this damn line in the first place. They get her new bill added up and she gets out her checkbook. It takes her about 10 minutes to write the check and she shouldn't be in this line in the first place and I'm in a hurry. Then she stands there and balances her checkbook. Now if I could practice these principles in the supermarket check-out line, I could be happy there, too.

What we're saying is: *it's really up to us. We have the tools, haven't we? We've got eleven Steps* that if we will use them in our lives on a daily basis, we can be happy, peaceful, and serene, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 4 weeks out of the month, and 12 months out of the year, *IF* we choose to do so, but, it's entirely up to us. Nobody can do it for us. Nobody will do it for us.

We will have to do this with God's help for the rest of our life if we want to be happy, peaceful and free.

It really does work, if we're willing to work for it.

After reading this chapter, discuss these questions with your group:

1. What are the step-by-step requirements for a twelfth Step?
2. Have you ever tried this? (Share your experiences with the group).
3. In cases where the alcoholic has not responded, have you worked with his family?
4. Did you offer them your way of life and what results did you have in this situation?
5. Do you believe that you should "Burn the idea into the consciousness of every man that he can get well regardless of anyone"?

Chapter Eight, "To Wives" Chapter Nine, "The Family Afterwards" Chapter Ten, "To Employers" Chapter Eleven, "A Vision for You" – are all chapters to teach you how to practice these principles in all your affairs.

These chapters contain many spiritual truths which apply to all of us and should be read.

FINAL ASSIGNMENT: Find some new members of Alcoholics Anonymous who need and want this program and do another Step Study team with them.

READ: "A Vision for You" on page 164. As it is a fitting way to end your Step Study.

A VISION FOR YOU – P.164

"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. (We did this in Steps 1, 2, and 3) ***Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows.*** (We did that in Steps 4, 5, 6, and 7.) ***Clear away the wreckage of your past.*** (We did that in Steps 8 and 9) ***Give freely of what you find and join us.*** (We do that in Steps 10, 11 and 12) ***We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road to Happy destiny.***
May God bless you and keep you – until then."

THANK YOU FOR BEING HERE!

GOD BLESS