Session #3 - Steps 6, 7, 8, & 9

My name is _____ and I'm an alcoholic. Before we begin, let's have a moment of "quiet time" to invite the God of our own understanding into our hearts and ask for an open mind and the willingness to have a new experience… followed by the "Serenity Prayer"…

Welcome everyone to the Third Session of the Wednesday Morning West Orange Beginners' Classes. During the past two weeks we've covered the directions in the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, for taking the first five steps of the Program of Recovery that our book suggests.

Last week, as a group, we began our 4th Step inventories together in class and briefly covered the directions for sharing our inventories with our sponsors and the God of our own understanding in Step 5.

Can I have a show of hands of those people that have completed their 4th Step and have done their 5th Step with their sponsor or spiritual advisor during the past week? [Take a count.] Congratulations! Let's read what are called the Promises of Step 5 on page 75 of the Big Book. If we have taken our 4th and 5th Steps as the Big Book has instructed us to do, then we will have received these results on page 75. Turn to page 75, second paragraph:

> "We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past. Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. We can look the world in the eye. We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. Our fears fall from us. We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. We may

> have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. We feel we are on the Broad Highway, walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

What a great set of promises. But we can't stop here. We must go further and take more action.

Hopefully at the end of your 5th Step your sponsor directed you to the last paragraph of page 75. The book tells us we get to take a "rest" for 1 hour between steps 5 and 6. These are the questions we should have reviewed after our 5th Step. If you were not directed to do so after Step 5, then we'll take a few moments to do so now. On page 75, third paragraph, the book says:

> "Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last.

So, we turn to page 59 and look at the first five steps as written in their short form.
[*Explain how to review the steps.*]

> <u>*Review Question 1:*</u> Is our work solid so far?
>
> [Time permitting, explain the "the Wonderfully Effective Spiritual Structure" – the "arch".]

Review Question 2: Are the stones properly in place?

Review Question 3: Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation?

Review Question 4: Have we tried to make mortar without sand?

"If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six."

Are we all able to answer those questions to our own satisfaction? If something else came up during the review, great! Write it down and share it with your sponsor immediately.

Let's move on to Step 6 like the book suggests we do.

Step 6: *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

The Sixth Step directions are on the top of page 76 in one paragraph. They simply state:

"We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something
we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing."

That's pretty simple, isn't it? Don't read more into the Steps 6 and 7 than the early members of our fellowship wanted us to. They kept it really simple: Are you willing

and ready to have God remove your character defects found in Step 4 and 5? Are you ready to ask God to remove your **selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear, inconsiderateness** and any other defects that may have come up when you took your 5th Step? If so, the book tells us to say the 7th Step Prayer. I'll read the prayer to you first, then for those who are ready to move forward, we'll say the prayer together.

> "When ready, we say something like this: '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.' We have then completed ***Step Seven***."

The original writing of Step 7 said, **"Humbly, on our knees, asked him to remove our shortcomings."** If you choose to say this prayer kneeling, please feel free to do so.

[Before saying the prayer together, ask for a moment of quiet time. Then say the prayer together.]

> "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."

According to the "Big Book" we have completed Step Seven.

Now, it is time to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends or restitution.

Step 8 ***Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.***

At this point in our work we will need to refer back to our Fourth Step inventories. From the lists of names on our inventories we are able to compile our Eighth Step amends list. We examine our sheets for the people we have harmed by our conduct and whom we owe amends. On page 76 in the third paragraph, the "Big Book" states:

> " Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.” Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine. 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. We subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember it was agreed at the beginning *we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol*."
> (page 76, para. 3)

We make a separate list of names even though they're already listed in our inventories. By having a separate list of names, we're able to see more clearly those people we will go to to make our amends.

The 12 & 12 suggests we redouble the efforts we made while writing inventory when making our Eighth Step list. On page 77 of the 12 & 12, Bill writes:

> "Every A.A. has found that he can make little headway in this new adventure of living until he first backtracks and really makes an accurate and unsparing survey of the human wreckage he has left in his wake. To a degree, he has already done this when taking moral inventory, but now the time has come when he ought to redouble his efforts to see how many people he has hurt, and in what ways."
> ("Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions": page 77, para. 2, lines 5-12)

Aside from the list of names of those we owe amends, there's a second part to this step that we don't want to overlook. Some people we will be willing to go to right away. With others, we'll have to pray for the willingness to do this. The book suggests we pray for the willingness until it comes. In the meantime, we can begin to make those amends that we are already willing to do. We have found when we begin the restitution process in conjunction with praying for the willingness to commence with the seemingly more difficult reparations, we start to cross off names we never thought we'd be willing to face. We become willing when we commence to get results from making the amends.

Let's move on to Step Nine.

Step 9 ***Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.***

On the fourth paragraph on page 76, the "Big Book" provides us with some insight as to how to approach some of those to whom we owe amends:

> "Probably there are still some misgivings. 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. Let us be reassured. To some people we need not, and probably should not emphasize the spiritual feature on our first approach. We might prejudice them. At the moment we are trying to put our lives in order. But this is not an end in itself. Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us."
> (page 76, para. 4, lines 1-6; page 77, lines 1-4)

In the last sentence of this paragraph, the "Big Book" clearly states our purpose for living. It tells us why we are here -- to serve God and our fellows.

The book continues by asking us to let our actions, rather than our words, demonstrate to others that we have changed. Starting with line four, the book states:

> "It is seldom wise to approach an individual, who still smarts from our injustice to him, and announce that we have gone religious. In the prize ring, this would be called leading with the

chin. Why lay ourselves open to being branded fanatics or religious bores? We may kill a future opportunity to carry a beneficial message. But our man is sure to be impressed with a sincere desire to set right the wrong. He is going to be more interested in a demonstration of good will than in our talk of spiritual discoveries.

We don't use this as an excuse for shying away from the subject of God. When it will serve any good purpose, we are willing to announce our convictions with tact and common sense."
(page 77, lines 4-14; para. 1, lines 1-4)

One of the most difficult amends to make is to someone we genuinely don't like. But, whether we like them or not, we must proceed. The text continues:

"The question of how to approach the man we hated will arise. It may be he has done us more harm than we have done him and, though we may have acquired a better attitude toward him, we are still not too keen about admitting our faults. Nevertheless, with a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth. It is harder to go to an enemy than to a friend, but we find it much more beneficial to us. We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit, confessing our former ill feeling and expressing our regret."
(page 77, para. 1, lines 4-14)

In the next paragraph, the text even provides us with instructions on what to say and what *not* to say:

"Under no condition do we criticize such a person or argue. Simply tell him that we will never get over drinking until we have done our utmost to straighten out the past. We are there to sweep off our side of the street, realizing that nothing worth while can be accomplished until we do so, never trying to tell him what he should do. His faults are not discussed. We stick to our own. If our manner is calm, frank, and open, we will be gratified with the result.

In nine cases out of ten the unexpected happens. Sometimes the man we are calling upon admits his own fault, so feuds of years' standing melt away in an hour. Rarely do we fail to make satisfactory progress. Our former enemies sometimes praise what we are doing and wish us well. Occasionally, they will offer assistance. It should not matter, however, if someone does throw us out of his office. We have made our demonstration, done our part. It's water over the dam."
(page 77, para. 2; page 78, para. 1)

The "Big Book" explains what to do about our debts. We may not like the sacrifice required to make good on our bills, but sacrifice we must. The process forces us to rely on God for guidance, which takes us out of self-will, and into God's will. Under God's direction, we find it much easier to make restitution than we ever thought possible. In the middle of page 78, the book states:

"Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors. Telling them what we are trying to do, we make no bones about our

drinking; they usually know it anyway, whether we think so or not. Nor are we afraid of disclosing our alcoholism on the theory it may cause financial harm. Approached in this way, the most ruthless creditor will sometimes surprise us. Arranging the best deal we can we let these people know we are sorry. Our drinking has made us slow to pay. We must lose our fear of creditors no matter how far we have to go, for we are liable to drink if we are afraid to face them."
(page 78, para. 2)

The next paragraph deals with criminal offenses:

"Perhaps we have committed a criminal offense which might land us in jail if it were known to the authorities. We may be short in our accounts and unable to make good. We have already admitted this in confidence to another person, but we are sure we would be imprisoned or lose our job if it were known. Maybe it's only a petty offense such as padding the expense account. Most of us have done that sort of thing. Maybe we are divorced, and have remarried but haven't kept up the alimony to number one. She is indignant about it, and has a warrant out for our arrest. That's a common form of trouble too."
(page 78, para. 3)

Next the book instructs us again to ask God for guidance. This reliance upon God is essential, if we are to outgrow the fears that have separated us from our Creator:

"Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding. 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. We may lose our position or reputation or face jail, but we are willing. We have to be. We must not shrink at anything."
(page 79, para. 1)

Next is an example of how to proceed when other people could be affected. Here extreme caution needs taken:

"Usually, however, other people are involved. Therefore, we are not to be the hasty and foolish martyr who would needlessly sacrifice others to save himself from the alcoholic pit. A man we know had remarried. Because of resentment and drinking, he had not paid alimony to his first wife. She was furious. She went to court and got an order for his arrest. He had commenced our way of life, had secured a position, and was getting his head above water. It would have been impressive heroics if he had walked up to the Judge and said, “Here I am.”

We thought he ought to be willing to do that if necessary, but if he were in jail he could provide nothing for either family. We suggested he write his first wife admitting his faults and asking forgiveness. He did, and also sent a small amount

of money. He told her what he would try to do in the future. He said he was perfectly willing to go to jail is she insisted. Of course she did not, and the whole situation has long since been adjusted." (page 79, para. 2 & 3)

The "Big Book" suggests we ask others for help before we make some of our more difficult amends. We need direction, preferably from someone who understands the inventory and restitution process. We must make sure we do not create further harm as we clean up our side of the street. At the top of page 80, the book says:

"Before taking drastic action which might implicate other people we secure their consent. If we have obtained permission, have consulted with others, asked God to help and the drastic step is indicated we must not shrink."
(page 80, para. 1)

Next is a story of a man that had to get consent from his family and business partner before proceeding:

"This brings to mind a story about one of our friends. While drinking, he accepted a sum of money from a bitterly-hated business rival, giving him no receipt for it. He subsequently denied having received the money and used the incident as a basis for discrediting the man. He thus used his own wrong-doing as a means of destroying the reputation of another. In fact, his rival was ruined.

He felt that he had done a wrong he could not possibly make right. If he opened that old affair,

he was afraid it would destroy the reputation of his partner, disgrace his family and take away his means of livelihood. What right had he to involve those dependent upon him? How could he possibly make a public statement exonerating his rival?

After consulting with his wife and partner he came to the conclusion that it was better to take those risks than to stand before his Creator guilty of such ruinous slander. He saw that he had to place the outcome in God's hands or he would soon start drinking again, and all would be lost anyhow. He attended church for the first time in many years. After the sermon, he quietly got up and made an explanation. His action met widespread approval, and today he is one of the most trusted citizens of his town. This all happened years ago."
(page 80, para. 2-4)

The next page or so deals with domestic troubles. Starting with the second line from the bottom of page 80, we find:

"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn't care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse that other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He

commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with “the girl who understands.” In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him.

Whatever the situation, we usually have to do something about it. If we are sure our wife does not know, should we tell here? Not always, we think. If she knows in a general way that we have been wild, should we tell her it detail? Undoubtedly we should admit our fault. She may insist on knowing all the particulars. She will want to know who the woman is and where she is. We feel we ought to say to her that we have no right to involve another person. We are sorry for what we have done and, God willing, it shall not be repeated. More than that we cannot do; we have no right to go further. Though there may be justifiable exceptions, and though we wish to lay down no rule of any sort, we have often found this the best course to take.

Our design for living is not a one-way street. It is as good for the wife as for the husband. If we can forget, so can she. It is better, however, that one does not needlessly name a person upon whom she can vent jealousy."
(page 80, para. 5; page 81, para. 1 & 2)

In the first paragraph on page 82, we are yet again instructed to ask God for guidance as we make good on our past misdeeds:

> "Perhaps there are some cases where the utmost frankness is demanded. No outsider can appraise such an intimate situation. It may be that both will decide that the way of good sense and loving kindness is to let by-gones be by-gones. Each might pray about it, having the other one's happiness uppermost in mind. Keep it always in sight that we are dealing with that most terrible human emotion—jealousy. Good generalship may decide that the problem be attacked on the flank rather than risk a face-to-face combat."
> (page 82, para. 1)

This is an example of how we must be tactful and considerate of others as we make our amends. Nobody said it would be easy - it just has to be done. Remember to always use God as your constant Guide. By following His direction, the most difficult situations can have a positive outcome.

In the next several paragraphs, the "Big Book" authors state quite emphatically that stopping drinking is only a beginning. We must take additional action if we are to recover from alcoholism:

> "If we have no such complication, there is plenty we should do at home. Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is to keep sober. Certainly he must keep sober, for

there will be no home if he doesn't. But he is yet a long way from making good to the wife or parents whom for years he has so shockingly treated. Passing all understanding is the patience mothers and wives have had with alcoholics. Had this not been so, many of us would have no homes today, would perhaps be dead.

The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept he home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough. He is like the farmer who came up out of his cyclone cellar to find his home ruined. To his wife, he remarked, "Don't see anything the matter here, Ma. Ain't it grand the wind stopped blowin'?"
(page 82, para. 2 & 3)

Not drinking is not enough. The "Big Book" makes that very clear. The reconstruction that will need to take place in most homes may at times seem difficult. But, once again, we rely heavily on prayer and guidance from our Creator. At the top of page 83, our text states:

"Yes, there is a long period of reconstruction ahead. We must take the lead. A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. We ought to sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it, being very careful not to criticize them. Their defects may be glaring, but the chances are that our own actions are partly responsible. So we clean house

with the family, asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindliness and love.

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. They will change in time. Our behavior will convince them more than our words. We must remember that ten or twenty years of drunkenness would make a skeptic out of anyone."
(page 83, para. 1 & 2)

Here we're told that in order to achieve the vital physic change, we have to live the A.A. program. So, we don't just take the Steps, we *practice these principles* on a daily basis. Next week we will be providing the information for this way of life and continued growth through the process of Step Ten, Eleven, and Twelve.

The next paragraph on page 83 gives us directions on what to do if we can't make amends to someone face-to-face:

"There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. We don't worry about them if we can honestly say to ourselves that we would right them if we could. Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. And there may be a valid reason for postponement in some cases. But we don't delay if it can be avoided. We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble

without being servile or scraping. As God's people we stand on our feet; we don't crawl before anyone."
(page 83, para. 3)

The "Big Book" concludes the Ninth Step with another list of results. Starting at the bottom of page 83, it tells us precisely what is going to happen once we commence to clear away the wreckage of our past. It describes these results as promises. The "Big Book" is filled with promises. These are just a few of them:

"If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will be amazed before we are half way through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change. Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them.

(page 83, para 4; page 84, para. 1)

What a message of hope! It is almost beyond comprehension that all of these wonderful events will occur if we just make our amends to those whom we have harmed. But, they will happen - that's a guarantee.

Lastly, we'd like to give you an example of someone who could not stay sober until he became willing to complete all his amends. This man is our Akron co-founder, Dr. Bob. He accomplished making all his amends in one day. Starting on the second paragraph of page 155, we read about Dr. Bob's Ninth Step:

> "When our friend related his experience, the man agreed that no amount of will power he might muster could stop his drinking for long. A spiritual experience, he conceded, was absolutely necessary, but the price seemed high upon the basis suggested. He told how he lived in constant worry about those who might find out about his alcoholism. He had, of course, the familiar alcoholic obsession that few knew of his drinking. Why, he argued, should he lose the remainder of his business, only to bring still more suffering to his family by foolishly admitting his plight to people from whom he made his livelihood? He would do anything, he said, but that.
>
> Being intrigued, however, he invited our friend to his home. Some time later, and just as he thought he was getting control of his liquor situation, he went on a roaring bender. For him, this was the spree that ended all sprees. He saw

that he would have to face his problems squarely that God might give him mastery.

One morning he took the bull by the horns and set out to tell those he feared what his trouble had been. He found himself surprisingly well received, and learned that many knew of his drinking. Stepping into his car, he made the rounds of people he had hurt. He trembled as he went about, for this might mean ruin, particularly to a person in his line of business.

At midnight he came home exhausted, but very happy. He has not had a drink since. As we shall see, he now means a great deal to his community, and the major liabilities of thirty years of hard drinking have been repaired in four."
(page 155, para. 2 & 3; page 156, para. 1 & 2)

This concludes our discussion of Step Nine. For the newcomers and those taking the Steps with us, your assignment for the next week is to start on your amends list. If you are not sure how to proceed with a specific amends, ask your "sponsor" or spiritual advisor for help.

Next week, we will take Steps Ten, Eleven, and Twelve. We wish you the very best as you leave here to make your amends. Miracles are about to occur and we are looking forward to hearing about them next week. We'll see you then. Are there any questions?

Prepared by Mike L. for the West Orange, New Jersey A.A. “Beginners’ Classes”. This format may be used and distributed provided that a fee, except for photocopying reimbursement, is NOT charged. Please do not change, modify, or alter without prior consent from the author. For additional copies of this guide call 973-731-1073 or email mjl221@att.net. May God bless you in your journey through taking and teaching the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.