

a Big Book Study Newsletter

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2022-Nov-4 ~ " This Week's Special—Complete Overhaul"¹

Shaping sound ideals is a simple, two-step process which doesn't involve actually writing down "new ideals".

- 1) Examine past conduct honestly—no matter what it was—make a list on paper:
 - a. Write the names of persons we hurt by our conduct.²
 - b. Write the hurt or harm they experienced as the result of our misconduct.³
 - c. Write the precise conduct that caused the hurt:
"Where was I at fault?"⁴
 - d. Write the answer to this important question:
"What should I have done instead?"⁵
 - e. Finally, we "fire-test" this conduct by writing "Yes" or "No" after each incident answering this question:
"Was it selfish or not?"⁶

Our ability to answer the question "What should I have done?" will reveal our existing ideals. Our honest answer here assures us we knew right from wrong when we unfortunately chose to do the wrong thing. And this helps us understand our real problem, which is that we can't live up to our ideals by "wishing or trying" on our own power.⁷

"...we could not live up to them even though we would have liked to."⁸

Having gained a rough idea of our existing ideals, we proceed next...

- 2) ...to ask God to help us to begin to rely on "His Power, His Love, and His Way of Life".⁹
 - a. "We ask God to mold our ideals...."¹⁰
 - b. And, we ask God "...to help us live up to them."¹¹

In other words, we keep making a conscious choice to put our will and lives—our future conduct—into God's hands.¹²

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt."¹³

The reason we write down our conduct but not our ideals is that God is going to overhaul our ideals. We asked Him to "mold" them. That means God will sharpen our ideals, make them clearer, more definite, more useful, and more readily available to our hearts and minds.

Such an excellent overhaul is not free, however, and there is only One Shop in town that does the work:

"Simple, but not easy; a price had to be paid." ¹⁴

"I must turn in all things to the Father of Light who presides over us all."¹⁵

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¹ (Ch5~68.4)[2]

² (Ch5~69.1)[3]

³ (Ch5~69.1)[4]

⁴ (Ch5~69.1)[5a]

⁵ (Ch5~69.1)[5b]

⁶ (Ch5~69.2)[2]

⁷ (Ch5~62.2)[8]

⁸ (Ch5~62.2)[7]

⁹ (Ch5~63.2)[4]

¹⁰ (Ch5~69.2)[3a]

¹¹ (Ch5~69.2)[3b]

¹² (Ch7~100.1)[3]

¹³ (Ch5~63.2)[2]

¹⁴ (Ch1~14.1)[1]

¹⁵ (Ch1~14.1)[3]

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2022-Nov-4 ~ "We Can Count On It."

Sanity, a.k.a. "sobriety", is a Principle-Agent partnership:

"He is the Principal; we are His agents."¹

"Being all powerful, He provided what we needed, if we kept close to Him and performed His work well."²

But, how do we know what to at any given moment? In our Eleventh Step, "On Awakening", we learn to ask God to "Direct our thinking."³ But, how do we get His directions after arising from our morning meditations and starting the day? Can we just ask Uber to pick us up and drive us around while we nap in the back seat? What is our part?

First, our part is to proactively use our will power—yep, will power—"every day...in all activities"⁴ to deliberately keep asking God what He wants us to do next. This is what it means to "keep close to Him".

"Every day...[in] all of our activities.

"How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done.'

"These are thoughts which must go with us constantly.

"We can exercise our will power along this line all we wish.

"It is the proper use of the will."⁵

(P.S. This is actually the Tenth Step is all about, the "Proactive" side of the Tenth Step.)

And second, our part is to use our brains, skills, education, ingenuity, and resources to do what God would have us do when we "think" we know what that is. This is what it means to "do His work well"—to the best of our ability.

"Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and humbly rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity."⁶

Since God—our Principal—provides what we need, when we ask Him to "direct our thinking", if we're making an effort to "do His work", we can count on Him to provide "inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision" as needed.⁷

"Much has already been said about receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power.

"...we have begun to sense the flow of His Spirit into us.

"...we have become God-conscious."⁸

See also Appendix II, esp. Apx2~570--[2nd/3rd Eds] | 568--[4th Ed].1

We can count on it.

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¹ (Ch5~62.3)[5]

² (Ch5~63.1)[3]

³ (Ch6~86.2)[3]

⁴ (Ch6~85.1)[5]

⁵ (Ch6~85.1)[5-9]

⁶ (Ch5~68.2)[5]

⁷ (Ch6~86.3)[3]

⁸ (Ch6~85.2)[1-4]

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2022-Oct-28 ~ "How Do We Do That?"

Now that we've come to believe "God cares"¹, how do we put our will and lives into God's hands²? Step Four is where we begin to learn exactly what to do to make God our "Director"³.

Resentment, fear, and guilt block us from "receiving strength, inspiration, and direction from Him who has all knowledge and power⁴."

"For when harboring such feelings we shut ourselves off from the sunlight of the Spirit⁵."

In Step Four, we learn how to be rid of resentment⁶.

And this is how we do that: "we ask God to help us to..."

- a) "show [these sick people like us with whom we are angry] the same tolerance, pity, and patience...we would cheerfully grant a sick friend."⁷
- b) "save us from being angry" and show us "how we can be helpful" [to them]⁸.

When we can forgive people who wronged us, we can look at our own wrongs.

"Putting out of our minds (i.e. "forgiving") the wrongs others had done we resolutely looked for our own mistakes⁹."

Later, to completely remove those feelings which block us, we will "...ask God what to do about each specific matter."¹⁰ That will be what Steps Eight and Nine¹¹ are about.

In Step Four, we also learn how to be rid of "fear"... Fear is the direct result of our obsessive quest¹² for self-sufficiency¹³. Our thinking is "God-doesn't-care-so-I'm-on-my-own"^{14,15}.

"We asked ourselves why we had [these fears]. Wasn't it because self-reliance failed us¹⁶?"

To be rid of fear (to "outgrow" fear), we do this: Once again we ask God to

- a) "...remove our fear..."¹⁷
- b) "...direct our attention to what He would have us be."¹⁸

In other words, we ask God (a.k.a. our Director) to "direct our thinking..."¹⁹

When we ask God to direct our thinking, this is what our thinking looks like: "We constantly remind ourselves...."²⁰

"...we are no longer running the show..."²¹

"We are on the basis of trusting and relying upon God."²²

"We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves."²³

"We are in the world to play the role He assigns."²⁴

"...we do as we think he would have us."²⁵

"We let Him demonstrate, through us, what He can do."²⁶

Step Four is where we begin to learn how to put our lives into God's hands.

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¹ (Ch1~12.5)[1-2]

² (Ch7~100.1)[3]

³ (Ch5~62.3)[4]

⁴ (Ch6~85.2)[1-4]

⁵ (Ch5~66.1)[5]

⁶ (Ch5~66.3)[6-7]

⁷ (Ch5~66.4)[3]

⁸ (Ch5~66.4)[5-6]

⁹ (Ch5~67.2)[2]

¹⁰ (Ch5~69.3)[4]

¹¹ (Ch6~76.3)[2-6]

¹² (Ch2~23.2)[6]

¹³ (Ch4~52.4)[3]

¹⁴ (Ch1~10.4)[2]

¹⁵ (Ch4~45.3)[6]

¹⁶ (Ch5~68.1)[4]

¹⁷ (Ch5~68.3)[9a]

¹⁸ (Ch5~68.3)[9b]

¹⁹ (Ch6~86.2)[3]

²⁰ (Ch6~87.3)[2a]

²¹ (Ch6~87.3)[2b]

²² (Ch5~68.2)[2b]

²³ (Ch5~68.2)[3]

²⁴ (Ch5~68.2)[4]

²⁵ (Ch5~68.2)[5]

²⁶ (Ch5~68.3)[8]

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2022-Oct-21 ~ "It's Not About 'Fixing Me' "

Step Four is not primarily about identifying character defects so we can "work on them".

"Neither could we reduce our self-centeredness much by wishing or trying on our own power.

"We had to have God's help."¹

A list of our "character defects" is secondary to taking stock of the causes and the effects of trying to manage our own lives, a.k.a. "playing God", a.k.a. trying to "fix ourselves"².

"Our [isim, addiction, or dependency] was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions. **Therefore**, we started upon a personal inventory."³

- Causes: we didn't believe God cared about us⁴ so we had to selfishly fend for ourselves;
- Effects: the damage we did to other people.

After making our resentment list, here is what we find in the next seven paragraphs:

- The dangers of resentment—Four paragraphs.⁵
- How to "master" resentments by putting ourselves into God's hands—Two paragraphs.⁶
- Looking for our own mistakes—wrongs—which preps us for Step Eight—One paragraph.⁷

That's it.

The idea that Step Four is mainly about identifying character defects so we can "work on them" is a misunderstanding of two sentences from that last of paragraph above:

"Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?"⁸

"When we saw our faults we listed them."⁹

That's why we think "faults" means "character defects", and we list them so we can work on them. That's not what "faults" means in this paragraph. And defects are not what we "work on" anyway.

In context, "faults" means wrongs—damage done to others—not "character defects".

"We were mad at each other. Then I stepped on his foot, so that fist-fight was my fault."

"Though a situation had not been entirely our fault, we tried to disregard the other person involved entirely....When we saw our faults we listed them....We admitted our wrongs honestly and were willing to set these matters straight."¹⁰

What **do** we "work on" then? That last sentence says the real work we do will be in Steps Eight and Nine where we go out to our fellows to clear away the damage we've done—*REAL* work.

"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...[when] we subjected ourselves to a drastic self-appraisal. Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past."¹¹

None of the Steps are about identifying our own character defects so we can "work on them".

It is, however, *somebody's* job to work on our character defects. Steps Six and Seven are about asking our Creator to remove whatever character defects He thinks need to be removed to do His work¹². God is the only person mentioned in the book whose job it is to "work on our character defects."

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¹ (Ch5~62.2)[8-9]

² (Ch4~52.4)[3]

³ (Ch5~63.4)[3]–(Ch5~64.1)[1]

⁴ (Ch1~10.4)[2]

⁵ (Ch5~65.3)–(Ch5~66.3)

⁶ (Ch5~66.4)–(Ch5~67.1)

⁷ (Ch5~67.2)

⁸ (Ch5~67.2)[3]

⁹ (Ch5~67.2)[7]

¹⁰ (Ch5~67.2)[4,7,9]

¹¹ (Ch6~76.3)[3-6]

¹² (Ch6~76.2)[2]

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2022-Oct-14 ~ "Who Does The 'Fixing'?"

At one time or another, most of us thought Step Four was about nailing down all our "defects of character" so we could "work on them".

It's true that Step Four is a "is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process."¹

It's a "strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us."²

It's this "being rid of" idea that throws us off. We assume "to be rid of" means we have to do the "getting-rid-of", in other words, that getting rid of defects is our job

But, that can't be true because whatever we do to fix ourselves just makes things worse:

"Being convinced that self...was what had defeated us..."³

"...there...seems no way of...getting rid of self without His aid."⁴

Remember, our problem is that we're suffering from "selfishness-self-centeredness". This is a "spiritual malady" that blocks us from the "the sunlight of [His] Spirit."⁵

What could be blocking us from receiving God's help more than "self-fixing", "self-reliance" which is the opposite of "trust and reliance on infinite God"⁶?

If we go into Step Four with the idea of "fixing ourselves", we will be doing just what we've always done—we'll be insanely⁷ obsessed⁸ with trying to manage our own lives, trying to be "self-sufficient"⁹, trying "to arrange life to suit ourselves"¹⁰.

If we decide to "make God our Director"¹¹ and "take the position"¹² that our "new Employer"¹³ "provides what we need [to] do His work..."¹⁴, then we can be confident that what He provides will include removal of character defects which stand in the way of—wait for it—wait for it—doing "His work".

"We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator..."¹⁵

This is exactly what Steps Six and Seven are about:

"Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable?"¹⁶

"...that you now remove every single defect of character which stands in the way of [our] usefulness to you and [our] fellows."¹⁷

Step Four is about facing the manifestations of "self-will", the things which are "objectionable", which have "defeated us." But, it's not about fixing ourselves. Just the opposite.

It's about cementing our decision to putting our will and lives into God's care, for Him to do with us as He sees fit.¹⁸

It'll be God's job to do the "fixing".

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¹ (Ch5~64.1)[4]

² (Ch5~63.4)[2]

³ (Ch5~64.2)[4]

⁴ (Ch5~62.2)[6]

⁵ (Ch5~66.1)[5]

⁶ (Ch5~68.2)[3]

⁷ (Ch2~23.1)[2]

⁸ (Ch2~23.2)[6]

⁹ (Ch4~52.4)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch6~87.3)[5]

¹¹ (Ch5~62.3)[4]

¹² (Ch5~63.1)[1]

¹³ (Ch5~63.1)[2]

¹⁴ (Ch5~63.1)[3]

¹⁵ (Ch6~72.1)[2]

¹⁶ (Ch6~76.1)[3]

¹⁷ (Ch6~76.2)[2]

¹⁸ (Ch5~63.2)[2]

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2022-Oct-07 ~ "Quite A Deal Really...Equally Beneficial."

Once we decide we must be rid of selfishness or it kills us¹ and we realize we can't be rid of it by "wishing or trying in our own power"², we come face to face with a simple, but very good idea³.

First, we have to quit "playing God"⁴, that is, we have to quit trying to do God's job. Duh!
And next, we decide to make God our Director⁵; that is, we decide to do the jobs God directs us to do rather than continue to wreak havoc by trying to "arrange life to suit ourselves"⁶.

The book says, "Most good ideas are simple" and this simple idea leads to freedom⁷, peace of mind⁸, consciousness of His presence⁹, and a "way of living infinitely more satisfying and...more useful than the life [we] lived before."¹⁰

When we make this decision, we have a "new Employer"¹¹ which comes with a new "Employment Agreement" so to speak.

- For our part, we agree to "stay close to Him and do His work well"¹². We offer the one thing we have which is value to Him—ourselves—"to build with us and do with us" as He thinks best¹³.
- For His part, our new Employer agrees to provide everything we need¹⁴ to do His work. He agrees to "remove the bondage of self that [we] may better do [His work]"¹⁵. He even agrees to "remove every single defect of character which stands in the way of [our] usefulness to [Him] and [our] fellows."¹⁶

So, this Step Three is **not "surrender"** and it's **not "submission"**.

We do not sit around like prisoners in a POW camp waiting for God to do something.

Instead, this equally beneficial agreement goes into effect as soon as we put our Faith into action¹⁷, "abandoning ourselves with enthusiasm to the idea of helping other[s]...find a solution to their problems."¹⁸

- We benefit as God begins to restore our sanity¹⁹ and to "solve all our problems"²⁰.
- God benefits by having us join Him in the work He does caring for other people and helping them come to know Him as we have done²¹.

What really gives us hope for the future is the fact that both we and God have motives to keep this agreement going. For our part, we're motivated by the happiness we experience in "a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes"²². But, God also has a motive, one that promises He will keep helping us for as long as we are willing²³:

He "take[s] away [our] difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those [we] would help of [His] Power, [His] Love, and [His] Way of life."²⁴

Quite a deal really.

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¹ (Ch5~62.2)[3-4]

² (Ch5~62.2)[8]

³ (Ch5~62.3)[7]

⁴ (Ch5~62.3)[2]

⁵ (Ch5~62.3)[4]

⁶ (Ch6~87.3)[5]

⁷ (Ch5~62.3)[7]

⁸ (Ch5~63.1)[6]

⁹ (Ch6~85.2)[1-4]

¹⁰ (Ch3~42.3)[2]

¹¹ (Ch5~63.1)[2]

¹² (Ch5~63.1)[3c]

¹³ (Ch5~63.2)[2]

¹⁴ (Ch5~63.1)[3b]

¹⁵ (Ch5~63.2)[3]

¹⁶ (Ch6~76.2)[2]

¹⁷ (Ch5~63.4)[1]

¹⁸ (Ch1~15.1)[1]

¹⁹ (Ch4~56.4)[7]

²⁰ (Ch3~42.3)[1]

²¹ (Ch7~97.1)[2-13]

²² (Ch1~8.2)[8]

²³ (Ch1~13.5)[2]

²⁴ (Ch5~63.2)[4]

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2022-Sep-30 ~ "Most Good Ideas Are Simple."

In Chapter 5, after reading the list of all the Steps, we came to our "ABCs"¹:

"(a) That we were [whatever insanity] and could not manage our own lives."

"(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our [craziness]."

"(c) That God could and would if He were sought."

Now, we are asking, "What do I have to do?"²

Well, here is the simple idea:

"Selfishness—self-centeredness! That we think is the root of our problems."³

"Above everything, we...must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us!"⁴

So, the problem is simple—selfishness.

And the solution is simple—be rid of selfishness.

How do we do this?

FIRST, we have to quit playing God.⁵ The “root of our trouble” is that we’ve been trying to arrange things to suit ourselves⁶. We have to quit doing that.

NEXT, we have to decide whether or not to "*abandon ourselves utterly to [‘One who has all power’]*"⁷ and "*We thought well before taking this step making sure we were ready....*"⁸ Do I really want to put my life in God’s hands? If we’re ready to be ready, then we

"[Decide] to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."⁹

"our will" = choosing to do "God's work" rather than trying to run the whole show ourselves.¹⁰ "*Thy will (not mine) be done.*"¹¹

"our lives" = "our self-esteem, our pocketbooks, our ambitions, our personal relationships."¹² "He provides [everything] we need, if we [keep] close to Him and [do] His work well."¹³

FINALLY, "we launched out on a course of vigorous action..."¹⁴

"This requires action on our part...."¹⁵

"Now we need more action...."¹⁶

"...and that means more action."¹⁷

When we *do* this, we will "*...learn the full meaning of ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself.’*"¹⁸ In other words, we will have quit playing God and gotten rid of selfishness...

"Most good ideas are simple."¹⁹

But, that doesn't mean they will be "easy"?

Doesn't a really good idea just have to be easier than any of the ideas that already aren't working for us?

"We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not."²⁰

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¹ (Ch5~60.2)[2-4]

² (Ch5~60.3)[2]

³ (Ch5~62.1)[1-2]

⁴ (Ch5~62.2)[3-4]

⁵ (Ch5~62.3)[2]

⁶ (Ch5~60.4)[5-6]

⁷ (Ch5~58.4)[3]

⁸ (Ch5~63.2)[6]

⁹ (Ch5~59.3)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch5~60.4)[4]

¹¹ (Ch6~85.1)[6]

¹² (Ch5~64.3)[8]

¹³ (Ch5~63.1)[3]

¹⁴ (Ch5~63.4)[1]

¹⁵ (Ch6~72.1)[5]

¹⁶ (Ch6~76.3)[1]

¹⁷ (Ch6~85.2)[5]

¹⁸ (Ch11~152.4)[8]

¹⁹ (Ch5~62.3)[7]

²⁰ (Ch5~58.3)[2]

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2022-Sep-23 ~ "Being convinced, we were AT Step Three."¹ (*emphasis added*)

The first few pages of Chapter 5 are a recap of Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

The summary ends with "three pertinent ideas" which precede "making a decision to turn our will and our life over to the care of God"²:

"(a) That we were ['subtly insane']³ and could not manage our own lives.

"(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our ['plain insanity']⁴

"(c) That God could and would if He were sought."⁵

Please note the use of "insanity" above in place of "alcohol". When the book talks about "alcohol" in the way it does here—"cunning, baffling, powerful"⁶—it's not talking about a chemical substance which can be stored on a shelf. It's talking about a deadly "symptom"⁷ of a "spiritual malady"⁸.

The book calls this malady "insanity" because it leads sufferers to believe, obsessively⁹, that they can control any number of dangerous and disastrous¹⁰ behaviors which, in fact, their own experience¹¹ proves they cannot control nor ever have controlled¹².

A premise of this book is that very few of us would ever conclude (c) above if not for (a) and (b) above:

"We were in a position where life was becoming impossible, and if we had passed into the region from which there is no return through human aid, we had but two alternatives: One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."¹³

"Being convinced" of all three propositions above is how the book describes the mental and emotional condition which we must acquire *BEFORE* we approach Step Three.

"Being convinced, we were AT Step Three."¹⁴ (*emphasis added*)

In "Working With Others", the book describes what happens when people are "anxious to proceed" *before* "being convinced"¹⁵. These continue to believe either:

- they are not insane, i.e. not obsessed with controlling dangerous, destructive behavior;
- they are still managing their lives very well, thank you...(they think "the steps" will help them improve this ability);
- they can trust their lives to the care of a "sponsor" who will talk them off the ledge as needed;
- there is no God...or God is busy...or God doesn't care.

The book says these people will blame you and me when they fail; they will say we "rushed" them¹⁶. Their real problem is they are not YET convinced of their need for "God to do for them what they cannot do for themselves"¹⁷

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¹ (Ch5~60.3)[1]

² (Ch5~60.3)[1]

³ (Ch3~40.2)[2]

⁴ (Ch3~37.1)[1]

⁵ (Ch5~60.2)[2-4]

⁶ (Ch5~58.4)[1]

⁷ (Ch5~63.4)[3]

⁸ (Ch5~64.3)[4]

⁹ (Ch3~30.1)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch2~21.2)[16]

¹¹ (Ch3~36.3)[1]

¹² (Ch2~24.3)[3]

¹³ (Ch2~25.3)[2]

¹⁴ (Ch5~60.3)[1]

¹⁵ (Ch7~95.1)[4]

¹⁶ (Ch7~95.1)[6]

¹⁷ (Ch6~83.4)[12]

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2022-Sep-16 ~ What old ideas?

Right away in Chapter 5¹, we see recovery means letting go of old ideas:

"Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was [zero] until we let go absolutely."²

Next, the authors suggest a **few of the many new** ideas which are vital for recovery. For example:

New idea: "Remember that we deal with alcohol—cunning, baffling, powerful!"³

Please note: When the book talks about "alcohol" in the way it does here—diabolical, deceptive, and irresistibly strong—it's **not** talking about that chemical substance which can be stored in a bottle on a shelf. It's talking about one "symptom"⁴ of a "spiritual illness" or "spiritual malady"⁵ which leads sufferers obsessively to believe⁶ they can control any number of dangerous and disastrous⁷ behaviors which their own experience⁸ proves they have never controlled⁹.

The book is talking about the "thinking"¹⁰ which leads one to succumb¹¹ to another "debacle with all its attendant suffering and humiliation"¹². Elsewhere, the book calls this thinking "the subtle insanity"¹³ or "the insidious insanity"^{14,15} or just "plain insanity"¹⁶. It's talking about an illness¹⁷.

Our "old idea" is that our problem is *weak willpower*¹⁸ or just "*not doing it right*"¹⁹. We have to let go of the idea that we're dealing with something over which we or anyone else can control.

"The delusion (i.e. insanity) that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed."²⁰

Once we see this lack of power is our dilemma²¹, we face another proposal which confronts several old ideas:

New idea: "But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!"²²

We really must let go of old ideas like these:

"There's no God."

"There may be a God, but he/she/it doesn't do anything for bad people like me."

"They told me at a meeting I can choose a doorknob, the group, or my sponsor to be my 'Higher Power'."

"I love these Steps! Once I work them perfectly, I will be able to maintain my sobriety."
(In other words, "I will be my own Higher Power.")

The people who wrote this book²³, who "recovered from [this] seemingly hopeless state of mind and body", assure us they tried to hold onto these and many other old ideas, but got nowhere until they abandoned them, left them behind, let go of them absolutely .

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¹ the AA "Big Book" (2nd-4th Ed)

² (Ch5~58.3)[5]

³ (Ch5~58.4)[1,3]

⁴ (Ch5~63.4)[3]

⁵ (Ch5~64.3)[4]

⁶ (Ch3~30.1)[3]

⁷ (Ch2~21.2)[16]

⁸ (Ch3~36.3)[1]

⁹ (Ch2~24.3)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch3~35.1)[1]

¹¹ (Drs~xxvi^{2/3}[xxviii⁴.4])[5]

¹² (Ch2~22.2)[2]

¹³ (Ch3~40.2)[2]

¹⁴ (Ch1~8.2)[3]

¹⁵ (Ch11~154.3)[6]

¹⁶ (Ch3~37.1)[1]

¹⁷ (Ch2~18.1)[1]

¹⁸ (Ch2~20.3)[7]

¹⁹ (Ch2~24.2)[2]

²⁰ (Ch3~30.2)[3]

²¹ (Ch4~45.1)[1]

²² (Ch5~58.4)[3-4]

²³ (Fwd1~xiii.1)[1]

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2022-Sep-9 ~ “That is the miracle of it.”^{1,2}

We might sometimes forget just how insidious this illness is.

"Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves."³

Consider the difference between those who "cannot" and those who "will not". We pity those who "cannot". Poor fellows! Just can't get started. Truly hopeless. But, what do we think of those who "will not"?

Well, it's their own fault, isn't it? They could stop if they wanted." *Just do the steps!*" we tell them. Meanwhile, we tell ourselves: "The book says, 'Don't waste your time on them'." (Actually, the book doesn't say that!⁴)

Is there a difference between those who "cannot" and those who "will not"?

The book says: There is no difference whatsoever between them, none, nada, zip, zero!

"They [both] are not at fault: they seem to have been born that way."⁵

IOW, the fellow who "will not" is just as trapped and just as powerless and helpless as the fellow who "cannot".

"Remember, they are very ill."⁶

What hope is there for the person who "cannot" or who "will not"?

"Remember that we deal with [*the subtle insanity*]—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find Him now!"⁷

Our “constitutional incapacity” must change, but how?

God Himself can do the miraculous, can change "stubbornness, touchiness, and close-mindedness"⁸ from "cannot" and "will not" to "willingness"⁹. This is why recovery is a miracle.

Re: The story of the minister's son in Ch4:

"Circumstances made him willing to believe."¹⁰

Who but God can control circumstances?!?!¹¹

When we're beyond human power, God can make us willing—willing to be honest, willing to be open-minded, and even willing to be willing¹². But willingness doesn't come easy for us who were “constitutionally incapable”:

"In this respect [*the symptom of our insanity*] was a great persuader.

"It [resulted in circumstances which] finally beat us into a state of reasonableness.

"Sometimes this was a tedious process..."¹³

The One who has all power...that's the one who gets all credit.

"That is the miracle of it."¹⁴

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² (Ch6~84.3)[8]

³ (Ch5~58.1)[2]

⁴ (Ch7~90.1)[2]

⁵ (Ch5~58.1)[4]

⁶ (Ch7~89.1)[6]

⁷ (Ch5~58.3)[1-4]

⁸ (Ch4~47.4)[1]

⁹ (Apx2~570^{2/3}|5684.3)[2-3]

¹⁰ (Ch4~57.1)[3]

¹¹ (Ch5~58.3)[3]

¹² (Ch6~76.1)[5]

¹³ (Ch4~47.4)[6-8]

¹⁴ (Ch6~84.3)[8]

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2022-Sep-2 ~ What did the minister's son know?

Appendix II¹ makes sure we understand that a "spiritual awakening" is *NOT* that sudden, dramatic experience which fell on the minister's son (at the end of chapter 4) "like a great tide at flood"². The evidence an "alteration in [one's] reaction to life"³ has occurred, Appendix II says, is a "personality change sufficient to bring about recovery"⁴ and this realization can be dramatic⁵ but also, the change can be so subtle that the person himself doesn't know it has occurred⁶. His friends, the Appendix says, often see a difference in him before he sees it in himself.

Of this change in the minister's son, the book says, "...its elements [were] simple."⁷

- First (Step 1): "Circumstances made him willing to believe."⁸ He also became honest with himself and admitted to himself he had been stubborn, unreasonable, and touchy: "Later, alone in his room, he asked himself this question: Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?"⁹

Next, (Step 2). He came to believe or willingly chose to believe¹⁰ that this new God of his understanding—"Who are you to say there is no God?"¹¹—*could* relieve him of the insanity which he currently suffered.

Third (Step 3): "He humbly offered himself to his Maker—then he knew."¹²

So, what did the minister's son come to know?

Note again: what he came to know, did *NOT* have to be sudden or dramatic though it was dramatic in his case:

"To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly."¹³

This "knowing", this revelation, is what Appendix II says is the "spiritual awakening":

What the minister's son came to know was "...a conviction of the Presence of God."¹⁴

"For the first time, he (the minister's son) lived in conscious companionship with his Creator."¹⁵

Appendix II again:

"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."¹⁶

Whether it occurs early in the step process or later, it's when one becomes aware of the profound change which has occurred in him, when he becomes aware of God's presence, this knowing, this revelation is a "spiritual awakening".

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² (Ch4~56.3)[3]

³ (Apx2~569^{2/3}|567⁴.4)[4]

⁴ (Apx2~569^{2/3}|567⁴.1)[1]

⁵ (Ch4~56.3)[1-7]

⁶ (Apx2~569^{2/3}|567⁴.4)[3]

⁷ (Ch4~57.1)[2]

⁸ (Ch4~57.1)[3]

⁹ (Ch4~56.2)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch4~53.2)[2-3]

¹¹ (Ch4~56.2)[6]

¹² (Ch4~57.1)[4]

¹³ (Ch4~57.2)[2-3]

¹⁴ (Ch4~56.3)[2]

¹⁵ (Ch4~56.3)[7]

¹⁶ (Apx2~570^{2/3}|568⁴.4)[1-2]

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2022-Aug-26 ~ The "Cornerstone" vs the "Foundation Stone"

The Cornerstone

Near the end of Chapter 4¹, we see the minister's son was "overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God..."² We're told that this was the cornerstone of his recovery,

"Thus was our friend's cornerstone fixed in place."³

The Foundation Stone

The foundation stone, is mentioned in "Working With Others" where the authors describe more about what Step 12 "helping others" is all about:

"Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough."⁴

What's the difference?

There's usually only one cornerstone on a building. But, there may be one or more foundation stones which do the work of supporting the building's pillars, posts, walls, and roof all the way around.

So, the **(a) cornerstone** of our recovery is our "spiritual condition"⁵, our "belief in the Power of God"⁶, our "sense of His Presence"⁷, our "conscious contact"⁸ with Him. But, the **(b) foundation stone(s)** of our recovery is our willingness to do the work⁹ and to keep on doing the work¹⁰ it takes to maintain this "conscious contact" with our Creator:

"What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the (b) maintenance of our (a) spiritual condition."¹¹

Are there other places in the book where both the cornerstone and the foundation stone are mentioned in the same sentence?

Here's one:

"He provided what we needed, if we [(a) cornerstone] kept close to Him and [(b) foundation stone)] performed His work well."¹²

There are many other references to these two building blocks of recovery, though not always in the same sentence:

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² (Ch4~56.3)[2]

³ (Ch4~56.4)[1]

⁴ (Ch7~97.1)[1-2]

⁵ (Ch6~85.1)[4]

⁶ (Ch1~13.5)[2]

⁷ (Apx2~570^{2nd/3rd}|568^{4th}.1)[1]

⁸ (Ch5~59.3)[11]

⁹ (Ch1~14.5)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch6~88.3)[3]

¹¹ (Ch6~85.1)[4]

¹² (Ch5~63.1)[3]

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2022-Aug-19 ~ Belief vs Consciousness of Belief

"The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you."^{1,2}

The authors suggest there is a difference between *belief* in "*the Great Reality within us*"³ and our *consciousness* (awareness) of this belief.

Earlier, they wrote that our problem *is not* that we have an "*inability to accept much on faith*". They say this is a "*seeming inability*"⁴:

"...for deep down in every man, woman, and child, is the fundamental idea of God."⁵

"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up...."⁶

Instead, they wrote, our problem is that we are "...handicapped by obstinacy (stubbornness), sensitiveness (touchiness), and unreasoning prejudice (close-mindedness)"⁷. The "fundamental idea of God" they state, "...may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things, but in some form or other it is there."⁸

"Coming to believe" in Step 2 means **making a choice**⁹—and **choosing to stay willing**¹⁰ to keep on making that choice through the rest of the Steps and beyond—to "*sweep away prejudice..., think honestly..., and search diligently within [ourselves]...*"¹¹

"Coming to believe" is to become *conscious* of our deep down *belief* in the "*God of our own understanding*" which is the Great Reality. Our aim is to establish and maintain "*a new relationship with our Creator*"¹² whom we come to believe "*can and will restore our sanity*".¹³

The authors make the case in Appendix II, that this is what is meant by a "*spiritual awakening*":

"Most of us think this awareness (consciousness) of a Power greater than ourselves is the essence of spiritual experience."¹⁴

"Sanity" is when, with "*willingness, honesty, and humility*"¹⁵, our Head and Heart are reconnected—when our Head is *conscious* of what our Heart has always believed deep down within.

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² (Ch4~55.4)[4]

³ (Ch4~55.3)[4]

⁴ (Ch4~47.4)[1]

⁵ (Ch4~55.2)[1]

⁶ (Ch4~55.3)[1-2]

⁷ (Ch4~47.4)[1]

⁸ (Ch4~55.2)[2]

⁹ (Ch4~53.2)[3]

¹⁰ (Ch1~13.5)[2]

¹¹ (Ch4~55.4)[2]

¹² (Ch1~13.5)[1]

¹³ (Ch5~60.2)[4]

¹⁴ (Apx2~570^{2/3}|568⁴.2)[1]

¹⁵ (Ch1~13.5)[2]

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2022-Aug-12 ~ "It's Not A 'Leap of Faith'"¹

Our problem isn't that we don't have faith or can't have faith. We've variously put our faith in all kinds of things: "people, sentiment, things, money, and ourselves"².

"In one form or another we had been living by faith and little else."³

The Big Book⁴ doesn't ask us to manufacture some new faith in something we don't really believe, especially a "particular idea" of God that somebody tried to convince us we ought to have:

"...the word "God" brought up a particular idea of Him with which someone had tried to impress them during childhood."⁵

And if, for some reason, that idea didn't "make sense" to us and we just couldn't believe it, we may have thought we had to do without God...forever.

"Perhaps we rejected this particular conception because it seemed inadequate. With that rejection we imagined we had abandoned the God idea entirely."⁶

Instead, the book first asks us to choose an idea of God that "makes sense"⁷ to us.

"When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God."⁸

In fact, the book says, we must search our own hearts for what makes sense to us.

"We found the Great Reality deep down within us. In the last analysis it is only there that He may be found. It was so with us."⁹

If our concept makes sense to us—that God is good, that He cares, that He knows what He's doing—then believing is no leap of faith, but is a rational choice:

"Hence we are at pains to tell why we think our present faith is reasonable, why we think it more sane and logical to believe than not to believe..."¹⁰

Faith in God is not "a leap". In fact, it seems to be a built-in feature of our lives, not something that we have to "do", but something we already have:

"We finally saw that faith in some kind of God was a part of our make-up, just as much as the feeling we have for a friend."¹¹

"It may be obscured by calamity, by pomp, by worship of other things (i.e. "faith in other things"), but in some form or other it is there."¹²

The 29 Personal Stories of the Big Book's First Edition (which may be found *here* or *here*) are real people's own first-person accounts¹³ of how they found the faith they already had and established new relationships with their Creator.

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¹ (Ch4~53.2)[3]

² (Ch4~54.1)[3]

³ (Ch4~54.1)[11]

⁴ the AA "Big Book"(2nd-4th Ed)

⁵ (Ch4~45.3)[4]

⁶ (Ch4~45.3)[5-6]

⁷ (Ch7~92.2)[14]

⁸ (Ch4~47.1)[1]

⁹ (Ch4~55.3)[4-6]

¹⁰ (Ch4~53.1)[7]

¹¹ (Ch4~55.3)[1]

¹² (Ch4~55.2)[2]

¹³ (Ch2~29.2)[1]

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2022-Jul-29 ~ How to spot people who can help...

Helping others is the "Foundation Stone"^{1,2} of recovery; helping others helps maintain our own "conscious contact"³ with our Creator⁴; this almost always helps us⁵ more than it might help them⁶.

While there are many ways to find people⁷ with whom to talk about putting spiritual principles to work to solve all kinds of problems⁸, a paragraph in Chapter 4 "We [Doubters] (i.e. Agnostics)", suggests one straightforward way.

On page 52, the book gives a brief list of common characteristics of people we might find all around us who are plagued with "the spiritual malady"⁹ which we discover elsewhere is the root of our trouble(s).¹⁰ We can empathize with people who...

- are having "trouble in personal relationships",
- can't "control their emotions",
- are often "prey to misery and depression",
- have "feelings of uselessness",
- are sometimes "full of fear" and unhappiness"¹¹....

Some of them will have our exact symptoms—whatever brought us to this book—most will have some or all of those just listed.

We can't solve their problems for them and shouldn't try—that's probably what co-dependency is¹² (which is yet another symptom of the spiritual malady)—but if we've been where they are now, we can share with them our own history of their troubles, our own stories of misery and depression, fear, guilt, anger, regret, etc.¹³.

When they ask or look as though they want to ask, "So how did you resolve your troubles (i.e. How did you recover)?"¹⁴, we can tell them exactly what happened¹⁵, how we chose to put our selves in God's hands¹⁶ and how God solved our problems¹⁷ in ways we could not have imagined.¹⁸

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² (Ch7~97.1)[2]

³ (Ch6~85.1)[5-6]

⁴ (Ch6~72.1)[2]

⁵ (Ch1~15.1)[6]

⁶ (Ch7~94.1)[7]

⁷ (Ch7~89.3)[2]

⁸ (Ch7~89.1)[1]

⁹ (Ch5~64.3)[3-4]

¹⁰ (Ch5~62.2)[1-5]

¹¹ (Ch4~52.2)[2]

¹² (Ch8~105.1)[1,3-10]

¹³ (Ch7~91.4)[2-3]

¹⁴ (Ch7~92.2)[10]

¹⁵ (Ch7~92.2)[11-15]

¹⁶ (Ch7~100.1)[3a]

¹⁷ (Ch5~63.2)[4]

¹⁸ (Ch7~100.1)[3b]