

Steps 10 & 11 as a Way of Life

Steps 10 & 11 have been proven to be absolutely vital to the long term sobriety of alcoholics, yet they are covered in a mere five pages of the Big Book (84–88). How can something so necessary to sobriety be so brief and when does an alcoholic need to start to practice these necessary steps for life? Let's take a look... Page(96:1) of the 12&12 says... "Prayer and meditation are our principal means of conscious contact with God"... (98:1) "There is a direct linkage among self-examination, meditation and prayer. Taken separately, these practices can bring much relief and benefit. But when they are logically related and interwoven, the result is an unshakable foundation for life."

The Big Book says...(84:2) "This thought 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...."

Let's break this statement down piece by piece...

Vigorously - full of physical or mental strength or active force; strong; energetically.

Do you think Bill Wilson really meant to express it this way? Yes!!! This is what I missed! I was doing steps 10 and 11 when I felt like it or half-assed. **Not like my life depended on them, which it does!**

This way of living- Notice that this is not a daily action, to be done once a day. Step 10 is a way of Living!

I must have the self-examination, meditation and prayers as my way of life!

That's right, Step 10 and 11 are a way of Life! Here again, I thought I was working the A.A. program, yet I had missed this major point. Self-examination – I had done a 4th step, although it was 10 years old. Meditation-I had no idea how to meditate or gain vision in my life. As for prayer, it was just something I did in the morning. The only problem was, right after I got off my knees, I proceeded to let my ego take over and with my character defects, my ego would run my life. Needless to say, I ended up almost as crazy as when I drank! Remember... ❁❁ (85:1) "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 do you suppose is the spiritual program of action Bill Wilson is referring to? Certainly it includes steps 10 & 11.

As we cleaned up the past- When do we start to clean up the past? I started when I began to look at what I had done in the past. That means I should have started this way of life as I started my 4th step! I missed this point in sobriety and it's no wonder why I was sicker at 10 years, then when I was still drinking. At least when I was drinking, I had alcohol to point to as a reason for my crazy behavior.

Well, now that we know what I missed. How did I work these tools into a way of living? First, I had to do another 4th step. Then I had to go back to the Big Book. On page (86:1) we are given several daily instructions.

The Big Book starts out with the nightly review and then it follows with the morning meditation. In between is a whole bunch of prayers. Let's look at these three tools of prayer, evening review and morning meditation and see how I have used them to weave a wonderful way of life. **An overview to steps 10 & 11 ...**

I start with the nightly review (86:1) (12 questions). The 12 questions show me where I have failed to live God's will to it's fullest. If I write this review down, I now have an outline for **what not to do tomorrow** and **how to clean up the mess I made today**. The fourth step is a wonderful tool to get our slate clean for the classroom of life. Once this slate is clean, we have to keep it clean, But how? The evening review is the tool to use and here's how I use it...

In the morning, I use the evening review as a basis for my morning meditation. The review helps me find the critical vision for my life. Remember...(85:1) **"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."** This concept of our vision of God's will for us is a repeat of what we already learned back on (68:2)... **"We are in the world to play the role He assigns. 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** Notice that "He" is capitalized because Bill is referencing God as he describes our need for vision in our lives.

The evening review also gives me my plan for the day because, my plan is to clean up the mess I made yesterday. And finally, the prayers give me guidance for what ever I face throughout the day! The prayers provide the tool for a conscious contact with God all day. It really is a wonderful system to live life by. What follows are individual descriptions of the three parts that make up my 10th and 11th steps and I will explain how I use self-examination, meditation and prayer to find Vision for my life....

The evening review questions (86:1)

Here are the evening review questions from the Big Book. They are a necessary part of the program, which on a daily basis, helps us find God's will in our lives. These questions are also a great way to foster intimacy within a relationship. If you want to try something new in your relationship, try answering these questions each day with your partner. I found in my life that the questions took my relationship to a new level. One word of caution though - If you are answering these questions with another person as a way of fostering intimacy, I highly suggest you keep quiet as the other person answers the questions. The questions are a great tool for you and your partner see into each other's lives but, they are not designed as a way for you to help or critique your partner's day. The questions offer a way, for you to see into your partner's life through *them being vulnerable with you*. Do not abuse that vulnerability by making "helpful suggestions" or "helpful criticisms", there is no such thing when it comes to these questions. Although I have found this process very, very valuable to my relationship and I highly recommend it, I have also found it very hard to keep quiet when the other person is answering the questions. Particularly when it is me that they are resentful at, dishonest to, afraid of, etc... Remember the goal of the questions within a relationship... to help you foster intimacy. It is for each individual, with God's help, to correct the behavior that caused a negative response to any of these questions. Anyway, give it a try and I think you will find it extremely beneficial to your recovery and to your relationship.

Evening Meditation Questions : (86:1) - The Book has the questions in the form of "were we"" but, I put the questions in the form of "was I"...

1. Was I resentful?
2. Was I selfish?
3. Was I dishonest?
4. Was I afraid?
5. Do I owe an apology?
6. Have I kept something to myself which should be discussed with another person at once?
7. Was I kind toward all?
8. Was I Loving toward all?
9. What could I have done better?
10. Were we (Was I) thinking of myself most of the time?
11. Were we (was I) thinking of what I could do for others?
12. Were we (was I) thinking of what I could pack into the stream of life?

But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken...

Here is the prayer of forgiveness I ask after I do the questions...

" God, please forgive me for my failings today. I know that because of my failings, I was not able to be as effective as I could have been for you. Please forgive me and help me live thy will better tomorrow. Father, I ask you now to show me how to correct the errors I have just outlined. Guide me and direct me. Please remove my arrogance and my fear. Lord, show me how to make my relationships right and grant me the humility and strength to do thy will. Amen"

I now make a list of the ways in which I intend to correct my wrongs...

If I was resentful, I write out the resentment as specified in the Big Book (a mini-Four column inventory).

If dishonest, selfish, unkind, unloving, I owe an apology or if I have kept things to myself, I write out the amend I will make tomorrow.

As for the rest of the questions, I meditate on how I can improve in those areas. If an answer comes to me, I write it down so I won't forget. These thoughts are mirrored in the 12 & 12..(94:1) " When prideful, angry, jealous, anxious or fearful, we acted accordingly, and that was that. Here we need only recognize that we did act or think badly, try to visualize how we might have done better, and resolve with God's help to carry these lessons over into tomorrow, making of course, any amends still neglected."

In the morning meditation there is the statement that we "consider our plans for the day" This list I have just made is the plans I have for the day. I have to correct the mess of yesterday if I hope to keep my side of the street clean so when I say my morning prayers, I ask God for help in those areas - if it is His will...

The bottom line is expressed very well in the 12 & 12...(95:0) “ An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek. Having so considered our day, not omitting to take due note of things well done, and having searched our hearts with neither fear nor favor, we can truly thank God for the blessings we have received and sleep in good conscience.”

The Morning Meditation

The 12 & 12 says... (98:2) “ As we have seen, self-searching is the means by which we bring new vision, action and grace to bear upon the dark and negative side of our natures. It is a step in the development of that kind of humility that makes it possible for us to receive God’s help. Yet it is only a step. We will want to go further.” What do you think is the “further” Bill Wilson is talking about? Let’s take a look...

To start with I say the following prayer as soon as possible in the morning. This helps me from getting too far off track with my day from the very start...

“God please direct my thinking and keep my thoughts divorced from self – pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Lord, please keep my thought life clear from wrong motives and help me employ my mental faculties, that my thought-life might be placed on a higher plane, the plane of inspiration.” (86:2)

Now, I am ready to do the first two items.

- 1.) I think about the 24 hours ahead – Here I meditate about what I would like to be and I think about what God would want me to be. (a better husband, better father, better A.A. member, better employee, better friend, etc.). I think about what God wants me to be, what I am to do and how I am to live His will. I come up with my vision of what I believe is God’s will is for me today. I do this by asking myself questions. I ask myself “what can I do today, to be a better father?” then I think about what would God want me to do today, to be a better father? Next, I ask myself “How can I be a better husband today?” then I think about what would God want Me to do today, to be a better husband? Etc., Etc., Etc... This process gives me the meditative vision of God’s will in my life, which our program requires.
 - 2.) I consider my plans for the day - I already have a list of amends from last night’s 10th/11th step evening review. I plan to start out my day with yesterday’s list of amends. Then, I ask myself, what else would God want me to do today? I think about, with God’s help, how I will fulfill my list of amends and I think about how I can avoid any repeats with my behavior for today. Once again, as in the first instruction, I focus my mind on my vision of God’s will for me today. Remember, It is only after I have cleaned up my mess from yesterday, that I can make plans for the rest of today...
 - 3.) Now I say the prayers on my prayer sheet (the prayers which come from the Big Book, see below) and I end up my prayer and meditation with some meditation books. (A.A.’s daily reflection’s, 2 pages of- As Bill Sees It, Emmett Fox’s daily meditations, The runners Bible, Thomas Merton- spiritual direction, A page or two of The recovery Bible, and Experiencing God etc.)
 - 4.) If your prayer life seems to be stale and you can’t seem to get new life into your prayers you may want to try this... Read from pages 84-88, start where it says “This thought brings us to step ten...” and turning every sentence into a prayer. It looks like this... “God please help me to continue to take personal inventory and help me to continue to set right any new mistakes as I go along. Father, help me to commence this way of living...etc.” This will help you because it keeps our prayers fresh and it helps you to make new prayers with the material every day. I also use some “key” words to remind me of other prayers. “resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help” sends me to pg 164:2 to the 12th Step prayer. “Love and Tolerance” sends me back to 83:1 for the 9th Step prayer. “memorize a few set prayers” reminds me to say the 3rd and 7th Step prayers.
- Steps 10 & 11 is where you get to expand your spirituality – There are lots of program meditation books and other spiritual books I have used in the past. These include... The 24 hour book, The A.A. grapevine, which I use when I am traveling. The Grapevine is called “our meeting in print” because when you are on the road you may not be able to catch a meeting. Our history books are great too like... A.A. comes of age, Dr. Bob and The Good Old Timers, Pass It On, Language of the Heart, Came to Believe, The best of the Grapevine, Living Sober etc. As I have already said, there are hundreds of resources for you to use (Eckhart Tolle-The Power of Now, Lau Tsu-Tao Te Ching, Don Miguel Ruiz – The Four Agreements etc.) and it is your personal experience with your higher power that you want to expand and enhance as you grow spiritually.

think you will find it a very effective and comforting meditation.

This is the prayer composed by Bill and recited during morning ‘quiet time’ P.I.O. (265:1)

“Oh lord, we thank Thee that Thou art, that we are from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be Thy holy name and all Thy benefactions to us of light, of love and of service. May we find and do Thy will in good strength, in good cheer today. May Thy ever-present grace be discovered by family and friends – those here and those beyond – by our Societies throughout the world, by men and women everywhere, and among those who must lead in these troubled times. Oh Lord, we know Thee to be all wonder, all beauty, all glory, all power, all love. Indeed, Thou art everlasting love. Accordingly, Thou has fashioned for us a destiny passing through Thy many mansions, ever in more discovery of Thee and in no separation between ourselves.”

The Eleventh Step

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. After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken.

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. 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. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind.

We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer but we ask that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be, that we be given whatever we need to take care of such problems.

As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done."

It works ~ it really does.

The Big Book Page 86-88

JUST FOR TODAY

I will take a good look at myself and see that I have many addictive and compulsive traits that have become dominant in my life. I am at the mercy of these traits and unable to manage them. Seeing this, I admit that I need help.

I will acknowledge the presence of a Power greater than myself who has created me, is aware of all my needs and is fully capable of healing me and restoring me to a condition of clarity and stability. This power is God as I choose to understand God.

I will let go of the inclination to figure out my problems with my mind. No more analyzing...no more questioning. I now make a conscious decision to turn my life and my will over to the care and keeping of God. I surrender the thinking that tells me I must "run my own show" and make my own life happen. I am ready to be a transformed (changed) person, beginning now.

I will release the past, letting go of my guilt or regrets about what happened "back then." Finding fault or blaming myself and/or others keeps me stuck in the past.

I will forgive myself and others for the way we've been. I realize that our actions have arisen out of fear and insecurity. I now allow myself and others to "be." I no longer pass judgment on our lives, our chosen paths or our patterns of growth.

I will drop all anxiety about the future. I will live **this day** with as much joy, trust and serenity as I can, realizing that this day is all I can handle.

I will let go of my tendencies to be dependent on persons, possessions and patterns to fulfill me. I recognize that these things are only a temporary part of my existence and cannot provide the lasting security, inner peace or true freedom that I yearn to experience on a daily basis.

I will take responsibility for all aspects of my life: my choices, my feelings, my physical and mental health, my spiritual well-being, my paths of growth and the principles and values by which I live.

I will utilize all the energies within me that contribute to the betterment of my life and to the lives of others (e.g., expressing honesty, integrity and kindness). To all else, I firmly say, "No, thank you."

I will thank God for the opportunity to be set free from old attitudes and behavior patterns that prevent me from moving in the direction of my needed healing.

I will willingly share with others the wisdom, peace and strength I have received through this Program.

I will go forth into this day with enthusiasm, believing in my own value and worthiness, and with the determination to enjoy this day and give it my positive best, come what may.

The 11th Step Instructions:

1. (86:1) We constructively review our day.
2. (86:1) Was I resentful?
3. (86:1) Was I selfish?
4. (86:1) Was I dishonest?
5. (86:1) Was I afraid?
6. (86:1) Do I owe an apology?
7. (86:1) Have I kept something to myself which should be discussed with another person at once?
8. (86:1) Was I kind toward all?
9. (86:1) Was I Loving toward all?
10. (86:1) What could I have done better?
11. (86:1) Were we (Was I) thinking of myself most of the time?
12. (86:1) Were we (was I) thinking of what I could do for others?
13. (86:1) Were we (was I) thinking of what I could pack into the stream of life?
14. (86:1) We must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse or morbid reflection, for that would diminish our usefulness to others.
15. (86:1) After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken...

A Nightly Review Prayer:

"God, please forgive me for my failings today. I know that because of my failings, I was not able to be as effective as I could have been for you. Please forgive me and help me live thy will better tomorrow. Father, I ask you now to show me how to correct the errors I have just outlined. Guide me and direct me. Please remove my arrogance and my fear. Lord, show me how to make my relationships right and grant me the humility and strength to do thy will. Amen"(86:1)

Upon Awakening Instructions:

1. (86:2) On awakening let us think about the 24 hours ahead.
2. (86:2) We consider our plans for the day.
3. (86:2) Before we begin we ask God to direct our thinking.

A Prayer for On Awakening:

"God please direct my thinking and keep my thoughts divorced from self – pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives. Lord, please keep my thought life clear from wrong motives and help me employ my mental faculties, that my thought-life might be placed on a higher plane, the plane of inspiration." (86:2)

During The Day Instructions:

1. (86:3) If we are not able to determine which course to take, We ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision.
2. (86:3) We relax and take it easy.
3. (86:3) We don't struggle.
4. (87:1) We usually conclude the period of meditation with a prayer that we be shown all through the day what our next step is to be.
5. (87:1) That we be given whatever we need to take care of our problems.
6. (87:1) We ask especially for freedom from self-will and are careful to make no requests for our selves only.
7. (88:2) We let God discipline us in the simple way just outlined.

An 11th Step Morning Prayer:

"God, should I find myself agitated, doubtful or indecisive today, please give me inspiration, help me to have an intuitive thought or a decision about this problem I face. Father, help me not to struggle, instead, help me to relax and take it easy. Help me know what I should do and keep me mindful, that you are running the show. Lord, free me from my bondage of self. Thy will be done always." (86:3)

An 11th Step Morning Prayer:

"God, please show me all through this day, what my next step is to be and please Grace me Father, with whatever I need to take care of the problems in my life today. I ask especially Lord, that you free me from the bondage of self-will, Amen."(87:1)

CONSTRUCTIVELY REVIEW MY DAY:

PRAYER

EXERCISE

FOOD PLAN

PROJECTS

WAS I RESENTFUL?

WAS I SELFISH? WANTED SOMETHING

WAS I DISHONEST?

OMISSION: IF THE PERSON WAS HONEST AND ASKED FOR YOU TO TELL THEM WHAT WAS WRONG

WAS I AFRAID?

DO I OWE AN APOLOGY?

HAVE I KEPT SOMETHING TO MYSELF WHICH SHOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH ANOTHER PERSON AT ONCE.?

WAS I KIND AND LOVING TOWARDS ALL?

HOW COULD I HAVE IMPROVED OR DONE BETTER?

WAS I THINKING OF MYSELF MOST OF THE TIME?

WHAT DID I DO FOR OTHERS TO MAKE THEIR LIVES BETTER?

GOD, PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR MY FAILINGS TODAY. I KNOW THAT BECAUSE OF MY FAILINGS I WAS NOT ABLE TO BE AS EFFECTIVE AS I COULD HAVE BEEN FOR YOU. PLEASE FOR ME AND HELP ME LIVE THY WILL BETTER TOMORROW.. FATHER, I ASK YOU NOW TO SHOW ME HOW TO CORRECT THE ERRORS I HAVE JUST OUTLINED. GUIDE ME AND DIRECT ME. PLEASE REMOVE MY ARROGANCE AND MY FEAR. LORD, SHOW ME HOW TO MAKE MY RELATIONSHIPS RIGHT AND GRANT ME THE HUMILITY AND STRENGTH TO DO THEY WILL. AMEN

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