

The 12 Steps for Anyone: Step 12 Helping You is Helping Me K. Wilson, 6.17.18

Step 12: **“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.”**

What’s “spiritual awakening” referring to, really? **Bill W. says:** *“When a person has a spiritual awakening, the most important meaning of it is that he has now become able to **do, feel, and believe** that which he could not do before on his unaided strength and resources alone”*

Term “spiritual awakening” implies we can be spiritually asleep, unaware-unconscious.
Blind spot. Don’t know that we don’t know

For many years, I was blind to experience of LGBT people—given stakes for a pastor and anxiety in church-society, it took something I would now describe as a **spiritual awakening** to see what was always there before me. Once you’ve undergone a spiritual awakening, you can’t believe you didn’t see it earlier—how did I miss it? You were asleep/unaware/blind.

Cultural moments of spiritual awakening. With white supremacy gaining ground in WH, halls of congress, state capitols, what POC have known forever is more obvious to everyone. #Metoo is helping more men come to grips with what women have long known about sexual harassment.

Spiritual awakening is a real thing. It happens all the time. And God is behind it. Say, a friend is always down on them-selves—they go through a mental health crisis, get some help, and begin to realize they are seeing world thru distorted lenses... it’s an awakening

Have you ever been asleep and find yourself in bad dream—and part of your brain seems to realize ‘this is a bad dream’ and you try in your dream-state to wake up...what happens next? You **struggle**, still mostly asleep, to wake up... you’re in **slow-motion escape mode**, wading thru a pool of **molasses**... Until you wake. That’s what the beginning of a spiritual awakening feels like.

“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps”

Bill W. had a flash-of-light experience that launched him on road to road to recovery. But it was the actual steps on that road that produced the lasting spiritual awakening.

Key phrase, “As a result of these steps.” This is the model of spiritual awakening in the gospels. The disciples don’t have classic flash-o-light experiences. They find themselves drawn to Jesus for reasons they may or may not be able to explain at first. And they follow him. They take a series of steps. An over time, they are changed *as a result of these steps*.

Evangelical movement emphasizes “born again experience” —but NT show more people having one “as a result of these steps” than as a result of a flash of light. In the book of Acts, Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul, author of 1/3 of NT had a flash-o-light conversion (just as Bill W. did) That experience can be a catalyst for sure, but the rue spiritual awakening as “a result of these steps” They learn to see, feel, experience, believe differently

So when we are having that “wake me up from this bad dream” feeling...the pain of our struggle with anxiety or depression, or our awareness of some glaring injustice is starting to sink in...what’s our next move? Focus, laser-like on taking next steps.

Let’s say you realize you’ve fallen into a whirlpool of anxiety and it’s taking over your experience of life

1. I need to talk to someone about this...and keep talking
2. I need to learn about anxiety, and how it manifests in me.
3. I need to ramp up exercise, treat my sleep apnea

We go through life focused on the task at hand...until we hit that wall...then we have to attend to a set of things we’ve neglected.

The awakening happens as we focus on the steps we’ve been neglecting...when you hit the wall, look for the path around it.

The great lie when we are struggling: “People don’t want to be bothered with my struggles.” And sometimes that’s true. But those who have struggled with the same thing and found some help, are usually quite happy to pass it on. Right?

“Praise be to the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” (2 Cor. 1:3–4)

Step 12: **“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics ...”**

AA is a fellowship that has discovered a deep spiritual truth: we only get to keep what we are also willing to give away.

When one alcoholic helps another, the helper understands that “helping you is helping me.” This removes the weird power imbalance between the helper and the person helped. Because the helper is not doing the person helped a favor. The helper is helping himself a favor by helping you. Step 12 is part of their recovery, not yours.

From Big Book of AA: **“Never talk down to an alcoholic from any moral or spiritual hilltop; simply lay out the kit of spiritual tools for inspection. Show him how they worked with you. Offer him friendship and fellow-ship. Tell him if he wants to get well you will do anything to help”** (AA, p 95)

The most effective help we can give other people comes out of our weakness not out of our strength.

That posture, “I possess the key, let me bend down to hand it to you” is the hallmark of superiority-religion that has nothing to do with the gospel, the message of good news.

Whatever it is we have to share with others, we share out of our pain: **where the good news is good to us**

And sometimes were not sharing “solutions.” Sometimes it’s not about sharing **“the spiritual tools for inspection.”**

Sometimes it’s just the offer of **“friendship and fellowship.”**

The term “fellow” means, “I’m like you...we share something in common” (fellow Tiger fans, fellow Detroiters)

[Experience of loneliness at church...]

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The wording makes it clear: our task is not to fix anyone. We’re not called to “try to fix” anyone. We’re only called to “try to carry this message.” If we’re **using** it, putting it

into practice in our own life, then we're **carrying** it, for others. All it takes, is the awareness that doing so helps us, is part of our recovery.

Enough for today. Next week, ask, what can we learn from the culture of AA to help us form healthier families and communities?