

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Having had a Spiritual Awakening or Spiritual Experience as is evidenced by an Entire Psychic Change as the result of taking the first nine Steps, we are now to begin our Spiritual Growth. Spiritual Growth is dependent upon our application of Steps Ten, Eleven and carried out in Step Twelve. Quite often, we hear some one say, "This Program is a journey without a destination", but the Big Book indicates that there is, indeed, a destination when it reads, "We have entered the World of the Spirit" (AA, pg. 84). We are further told that "we are to grow in understanding and effectiveness" (AA, pg. 84). That is precisely the purpose of Steps Ten, Eleven and Twelve; to grow in understanding that we do, in fact, have a Solution to all our problems and effectiveness in learning how to apply the Twelve Steps to whatever might appear to be a problem.

As we study the clear-cut directions for taking Step Ten on page 84 of the Big Book, we are told when to take it, how to take it, what the results will be and a reminder as to why we must take the Steps as they were given to us. So the first question is, "When do I begin to take Step Ten?" The answer to that is, "We commenced this way of living as we cleaned up the past." We cleaned up the past in Step Nine, so as soon as we begin the process of making amends is the time we begin taking personal inventory. We initiate the practice of watching for our mistakes and wrongs. What are they? They are exactly the same ones we found in Steps Four and Five. They are the manifestations of our selfishness & self-centeredness. And we are told we must take this personal inventory for the rest of our lives, if we want to truly enjoy life.

How specifically do we take Step Ten? "Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonest, resentment and fear." (Step Four). "When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them." (Steps Six & Seven). "We discuss them with someone immediately." (Step Five). "We make amends quickly." (Steps Eight & Nine). Then there is one more thing to do and that is to, "resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help." (Step Twelve). So, we take Step Ten by taking Steps, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine and Twelve moment by moment, day by day. Notice how very precise the directions are. When do we take Step Ten? Any time we are disturbed is the time to act "at once", "immediately" and "quickly", recognizing that our selfishness and self-centeredness are again displaying themselves. We must constantly remember that when we took Step Three, we gave up our right to ever have our way again as long as we live. We are now to learn to do God's Will; not ours.

So Step Ten is the beginning of our Spiritual Growth. It is the beginning of becoming a selfless person, learning to be a loving and giving person. That is the first Promise of Step Ten; love and tolerance of others is our code. This Step is necessary for continued forgiveness that is required to make our amends.

With Step Ten, we begin to be at peace with the people about us. We commence to understand that the quality of our life does not depend on what people think of us. We begin to understand that the quality of our life depends on how we feel about the people God has put in our lives. As long as we can look at everyone with love and tolerance, we are not disturbed. We are at peace so now we can begin to practice the next Step. Step Eleven suggests we seek through prayer (talking to God) and meditation (learning to listen to God) a greater conscious contact with our Heavenly Father, as we understand Him. Probably the most effective set of clear-cut directions for doing this will be found on pages 86, 87 & 88 of the Big Book. It was pointed out to me that God gave us two ears and one mouth. A God given clue as to how much I should talk (pray) and how much I should listen (meditate). That seems to improve our communication with Him. Too, He has more answers than we have questions.

Why is it so necessary to pray only for the knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out? Well, remember that we came to Alcoholics Anonymous because of our powerlessness, so we need to avail ourselves of His Power. And in Steps Three and Seven, we made Him aware that He is now responsible for the way we think, the way we feel and the way we act. Since He is now our Boss and we have promised to do His will always, it becomes vital that we check in with Him at the beginning of our day, throughout our day and again at bedtime seeking only the knowledge of He wants us to do and what we need to get the job done as He would have us.