

A Life of Principles and Purpose

Rebuilding Our Morality

By Rick R.

The twelve steps of the AA program are placed in numerical order for a reason. Each step is preparatory to the next step and each step requires a certain amount of attention before we can successfully move on to the next step. Simply put, Step one is acknowledging that we have a problem. Step two is about accepting outside help. Step three is where we surrender to that outside help. (A power greater than ourselves) Step four is the beginning of the *action* steps where we acknowledge and document the immoral behaviors of our past and those we offended. Step five may be the most difficult step where we must admit to God, to our self and to another human being, all those faulty deeds and habits. It was that "other human being" part that I found to be the most difficult thing and it delayed my progress for a short time. We cannot change one moment of the past, but we can change our habits and behavior as we begin our journey into the future and that is where Steps Six and Seven come in. To simplify my understanding of these two steps it occurred to me that most of my faulty behaviors (shortcomings) are the result of my (defective) thinking. Once I discovered the defect in my motives, it was not too difficult to change my behaviors. On the last page of Step 7 in the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions (12&12) it says, "The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear." Most of my fears were of the irrational variety as I discovered that they stemmed from experiences in my youth that caused my fears and insecurity and to do things that were morally wrong. Those actions were the Shortcomings that stemmed from my Irrational Fears. Once I recognize the defect(fear), the Shortcomings (Behaviors) were much easier to change. "Selfishness--Self-Centeredness! That we think is the root of our troubles. Driven by a hundred forms of Fear, Self-Delusion, Self-Seeking, and Self-Pity, we step on the toes of our fellows, and they retaliate." (BB pg.62) If, in fact, Selfishness-Self-Centeredness is the root of our problems it is plain to see that Unselfishness just might be solution to my problems. I could not have understood this line of thinking when I was still using alcohol to mask these problems. I do not believe that I would have been strong enough to follow these guidelines had I not completed Step Five and admitted my fault to God, to myself, and to another human being. The proper completion of Step Five was the most humbling experience of my life, but it opened the door to the rest of the program. Had I not done that I could never have taken my ego out of the game and the rest of the program may have been a shallow facade. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. Those words were put in place by the Co-founders of the program Alcoholics Anonymous and it gives each of its members the opportunity to choose their own degree of thoroughness when it comes to practicing the AA principles. I am so thankful that I did not let my ego stand in the way of my spiritual development and all the progress that I have made in the program. I have experienced all the promises and I encourage anyone who is still caught up in the Fear of Step Five to take the leap of faith, revisit it, get your ego out of the way, and clear your conscience. We only live once, and it would be a shame to waste this precious gift.