



MESSENGER

Take Step Eleven

One Man's View (June 1958)

WHEN IT COMES TO THE PRACTICE of AA's Step Eleven--"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out"--I'm sure I am still very much in the beginner's class; I'm almost a case of arrested development.

Around me I see many people who make a far better job of relating themselves to God than I do. Certainly it mustn't be said I haven't made any progress at all over the years; I simply confess that I haven't made the progress that I might have made, my opportunities being what they have been, and still are.

My twenty-fourth AA anniversary is just ahead; I haven't had a drink in all this time. In fact, I've scarcely been tempted at all. This is some evidence that I must have taken and ever since maintained Step One: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable." Step One was easy for me.

Then, at the very beginning, I was fortunate enough to receive a tremendous spiritual awakening and was instantly "made conscious of the presence of God" and "restored to sanity"--at least so far as alcohol is concerned. Therefore I've had no difficulty with AA's Step Two because, in my case, its content was an outright gift. Step Four and Step Five, dealing with self-survey and confession of one's defects, have not been overly difficult, either.

Of course, my self-analysis has frequently been faulty. Sometimes I've failed to share my defects with the right people; at other times, I've confessed *their* defects, rather than my own; and at still other times, my confession of defects has been more in the nature of loud complaints about my circumstances and my problems.

Nevertheless, I think I've usually been able to make a fairly thorough and searching job of finding and admitting my personal defects. So far as I know, there isn't at this moment a single defect or current problem of mine which hasn't been discussed with my close advisers. Yet this pretty well-ventilated condition is nothing for self-congratulation.

Long ago I was lucky enough to see that I'd have to keep up my self-analysis or else blow my top completely.

Though driven by stark necessity, this continuous self-revelation--to myself and to others--was rough medicine to take. But years of repetition has made this job far easier. Step Nine, making restitution for harms done, has fallen into much the same bracket.

In Step Twelve--carrying the AA message to others--I've found little else than great joy. We alkie are folks of action and I'm no exception. When action pays off as it does in AA, it's small wonder that Step Twelve is the most popular and, for most of us, the easiest one of all.

This little sketch of my own "pilgrim's progress" is offered to illustrate where I, and maybe lots of other AAs, have still been missing something of top importance. Through lack of disciplined attention and sometimes through lack of the right kind of faith, many of us keep ourselves year after year in the rather easy spiritual kindergarten I've just described. But almost inevitably we become dissatisfied; we have to admit we have hit an uncomfortable and maybe a very painful sticking point.

Twelfth-Stepping, talking at meetings, recitals of drinking histories, confession of our defects and what progress we have made with them no longer provide us with the released and the abundant life. Our lack of growth is often revealed by an unexpected calamity or a big emotional upset. Perhaps we hit the financial jackpot and are surprised that this solves almost nothing; that we are still bored and miserable, notwithstanding.

As we usually don't get drunk on these occasions, our bright-eyed friends tell us how well we are doing.

But inside, we know better. We know we aren't doing well enough. We still can't handle life, as life is. There must be a serious flaw somewhere in our spiritual practice and development.

What then, is it?

The chances are better than even that we shall locate our trouble in our misunderstanding or neglect of AA's Step Eleven--prayer, meditation and the guidance of God.

(Continued on page 4)

Does Your Group Have a GSR?

“The strength of our whole AA service structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) the group elects. I cannot emphasize too strongly the GSR’s importance.” (*Bill W., on General Services and the GSR*)

When you’re a GSR, you are linking your home group with the whole of AA. You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of “the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.”

The GSR position is a 2 year commitment. You will attend District and Area Assembly meetings to transfer information back to your group AND to vote in matters affecting AA as a whole. You typically give a GSR report to your group on a monthly basis.

Locally you can get involved and become a part of our committees: Facilities, Literature, Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Archives, Accessibilities, or the Grapevine. We need volunteers all the time! We have fun carrying the message, and would love to have every group represented in our district!

For more info, please contact the District 23 DCM (Don H.) Phone: 630-4834 or email: dcm@ccaadistrict23.com

Upcoming District 23 events:

- **GSR Monthly Meeting (Nov. 2):** 1st Monday at 6PM, Holy Cross Church, 1740 Cliff Dr.
- **Facilities Committee Meeting (Nov. 4):** 6 PM, SB AA Central Office. Chair: Earl U.
- **Area Assembly (Nov. 15):** Oxnard
- **Public Information Committee Meeting (Nov. 17):** 6 PM, SB AA Central Office. Chair: Don H.

Responsibility Declaration:

“I am responsible.

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.”

I remember hearing someone share in a meeting that low-self esteem was her goal because she had no esteem at all. I related to her because I only had other-esteem. I depended upon others to give me self-esteem or not. I wanted to please everybody all the time and I was forever apologizing for anything that you didn’t approve of. Eventually that created a lot of resentment so in addition to wanting your approval I also resented you! And that led to a lot of stinkin thinkin! When I finally had enough pain from trying to get esteem from other people, I began the work of finding it on the inside. It was hard work, especially grieving the fantasy that someone else would love me and make me feel worthy. The people who were my best teachers were the people who were problems for me, as our 10th step says, ***It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us.*** I began to notice that the more self-esteem I acquired, the more humility I acquired because, to my surprise, humility wasn’t thinking less of myself, it was thinking of myself less.

Today I know that what other people think of me is none of my business. I no longer have to walk on eggshells to maintain a relationship. I can accept you for who and how you. I can stop fighting everyone and everything.

The freedom of that is astounding! Thank you AA fellowship!

Tall Beth

HomeGroup: Saturday 10th Step Meeting

Thanks to the Convention and Hospitals and Institutions Committees

Dear Fellow Alcoholics,

I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to have been your guest, and one of your Hospitals and Institutions Speakers, at the 25th Annual Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Santa Barbara. To be able to have met so great a group of individual AA and Al-Anon members was a privilege and honor I am deeply appreciative to have received. I benefited beyond words to express from the experience, and thank you for having invited me to participate.. and for covering the costs. I could not have managed on my own at this time.

This was my first AA convention, my first time participating in Al-Aon meetings, my first time as a speaker to a group of AA's not in chains, and my first time in over 29 years in a hotel. There were other firsts at the convention, but let it suffice for me to say the experience was a delight for me. I can only hope that others benefited as much from my being there as I did from what you and they gave to me.

May God bless you all and cause AA in Santa Barbara to prosper and for the AA memorial wall to have fewer names added to it in the future.

Sincerely,

Brian T.
Alcoholic

Supporting Member Donation Coupon

I would like to become a supporting member of the Santa Barbara AA Central Office, and help it continue to carry the message and be there for the alcoholic who still suffers. I look forward to finding my monthly newsletter in the mail each month!

Enclosed is my first contribution of \$ _____. I will continue to donate this amount on a (circle one) monthly, quarterly, annual, other _____ basis.

I am already a supporting member. This is my regular contribution of \$ _____.

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Please make check payable to: AA Central Office, S.M.C.
1213 State Street, Suite H
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. – Seventh Tradition (short form), reprinted by permission of AA World Services, Inc.

The other Steps can keep most of us sober and somehow functioning. But Step Eleven can keep us growing, if we try hard and work at it continually. If we expend even five percent of the time on Step Eleven that we habitually (and rightly) lavish on Step Twelve, the results can be wonderfully far-reaching. That is an almost uniform experience of those who constantly practice Step Eleven.

In this article, I'd like to develop Step Eleven further--for the benefit of the complete doubter, the unlucky one who can't believe it has any real merit at all.

In lots of instances I think that people find their first great obstacle in the phrase "God as we understand Him." The doubter is apt to say, "On the face of it, nobody can understand God. I half believe that there is a First Cause, a Something, and maybe a Somebody. But I can't get any further than this. I think people are kidding themselves when they say they can. Even if there were a Somebody, why should he bother with little me, when, in making the Cosmos run, he already has plenty to do? As for those folks who claim that God tells them where to drill for oil, or when to brush their teeth--well, they just make me tired."

Our friend is clearly one who believes in some kind of God--"God as he understands Him." But he doesn't believe any bigger concept or better feeling about God to be possible. So he looks upon meditation, prayer and guidance as the means of a self-delusion. Now what can our hard-pressed friend do about this?

Well, he can strenuously try meditation, prayer and guidance, just as an experiment. He can address himself to whatever God he thinks there is. Or, if he thinks there is none, he can admit--just for experimental purposes--that he might be wrong. This is all-important. As soon as he is able to take this attitude, it means that he has stopped playing God himself; his mind has opened. Like any good scientist in his laboratory, our friend can assume a theory and can make an experiment. He can pray to a "higher power" that *may* exist and *may* be willing to help and guide him. He keeps on experimenting--in this case, praying--for a long time. Again he tries to behave like the scientist, an experimenter who is never supposed to give up so long as there is a vestige of any chance of success.

As he goes along with his process of prayer, he begins to add up the results. If he persists, he will almost surely find more serenity, more tolerance, less fear and less anger. He will acquire a quiet courage, the kind that doesn't strain him. He can look at so-called failure and success for what they really are. Problems and calamity will begin to mean instruction, instead of destruction. He will feel freer and saner. The idea that he may have been hypnotizing himself by auto-suggestion will become laughable. His sense of purpose and of direction will increase. His tensions and anxieties will commence to fade. His physical health is likely to improve. Wonderful and unaccountable things will start to happen. Twisted relations in his family and on the outside will unaccountably improve.

Even if few of these things happen, he will still find himself in possession of great gifts. When he has to deal with hard circumstances he can face them and accept them. He can now accept himself and the world around him. He can do this because he now accepts a God who is All--and who loves all. When he now says, "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name," our friend deeply and humbly means it. When in good meditation and thus freed from the clamors of the world, he knows that he is in God's hands; that his own destiny is really secure, here and hereafter.

A great theologian once declared, "The chief critics of prayer are those who have never really tried it enough." That's good advice; good advice I'm trying to take ever more seriously for myself. Many AAs have long been striving for a better conscious contact with God and I trust that many more of us will presently join with that wise company.

I've just finished re-reading the chapter on Step Eleven in our book, "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions." This was written almost five years ago. I was astonished when I realized how little time I had actually been giving to my own elementary advice on meditation, prayer and guidance--practices that I had so earnestly recommended to everybody else!

In this lack of attention I probably have plenty of company. But I do know that this is a neglect that can cause us to miss the finest experiences of life, a neglect that can seriously slacken the growth that God hopes we may achieve right here on earth; here in this great day at school, this very first of our Father's Many Mansions.

Bill W.

Faith

Apparently, I was driving my Chevy truck down Gutierrez some five months ago and crashed into a MTD bus. Of course, I abandoned the scene of the accident. I was running down a side street, as I approached a chain link fence that I had to jump over to escape the wreck, I remember a polite man's voice offer me a question, "Hey man, where do you think you're going"? Indeed, a logical question. I thought to myself, "Where did I think I was going? And more importantly what had I just done?" I painfully confronted the violently astute questions while I greedily sucked down three more beers at the local Mexican restaurant in rapid succession. It is amazing that the mind actually believes that the thing that had just caused an accident would now miraculously help me. In retrospect, the most terrifying aspect of the day was the fact that I had no memory of the accident. Imagine you start your morning with a few refined drinks and at the end of the day you come to bunk with a menacing caveman in a locked cell reading hieroglyphics about some jailhouse rumor that you killed a bus full of people. I had been duped. Tricked. Misled down a path that did not lead to the illusory promise of relief but entangled me with a formal arrest, loss of custody of my beloved son and hung a loving relationship in peril, not to mention an abundance of disappointed faces. The downright humiliation that day has caused seems irreparable and has left an indelible scarlet letter on my family and me. I had been struggling with the willingness to stay sober for some four years prior to this occurrence after a ten-year stretch of uninterrupted sobriety. It is discouraged in our Big Book to remonstrate the state of the upside down world although acknowledging the presence of war and upheaval seems apropos in light my parallel decisions. I held the belief that I could get away with that darned first drink. The loneliest word in my dictionary has been FAITH. That has been the missing link and the secret to unveil the joy in my life. I'm new to the concept, so if you see me on the street please be patient because I might be entering the world of the unknown and I would welcome your love and support. Maybe FAITH is quite simple. By practicing something that cannot be held, controlled, or manipulated is a perfect starting point to experience enough humility to know peace. The only change that seems worthy to me these days resides within the confines of my mind. This is much to my chagrin, as I love to hold blame out so I can exonerate myself from personal responsibility. God placed an empty bus on Gutierrez! It awoke me up to a willingness to do the actions suggested to stay sober. Thank you God. And everyone else for practicing compassion in their dealings with me.

Hunter B. Alcoholic



**October 2009
Birthdays**

Name	Years
Amy F	1
Annette G	1
Eva	1
Lia G	1
Marta C	1
Stan C	1
Mark G	2
Gary W	2
James H	2
Larry G	2
Lucy W	2
Pete M	2
Denise M	3
Jocelyn C	3
John H	3
Lorena	3
Jack C	4
Steve D	4
Katie G	4
Vicki	5
Vicky	5
John D	7
Mat M	10
Maggie	12
Cathy S	12
Diane F	14
Pam I	14
Samantha M	14
Peter J	19
Liz G	20
Jay B	20
Theresa P	20
Al C	21
Kim H	21
Tony N	21
Alison D	22
Pete L	24
Bryant C	24
Billy N	25
Nick C	28
John D	29
Ellen B	30
Richard A	32

The Messenger is published monthly by:

**23rd District Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous
1213 State Street, Suit H
Santa Barbara, California, 93101**

805-962-3332

JohnS@SantaBarbaraAA.com

Submissions Needed

The Messenger needs your submissions and letters. For the December 2009 Messenger, we are looking for articles for Step 12, Tradition 12, or Concept 12, or any other AA related story, H and I, or any story on your experience, strength and hope. Send submissions to **JohnS@SantaBarbaraAA.com**

Central Office Statistics

During September, 2009 your Central Office had:

AA Information calls	651
Al-Anon Referrals	45
Referrals to other programs	40
12 step via answering service	31
Out-of-town visitors	29
12-step via office	35
Office walk-ins	378
Hits on our Web site	1,959

Service Meetings

General Service Representatives (GSR) meet at 6:00 p.m. on the 1st Monday of each month at Holy Cross Church Hall, 1740 Cliff Dr. Behind the Church.

IGR's (Intergroup Representatives) meet at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at First Presbyterian Church, 21 East Constance in Santa Barbara.

H&I (Hospitals & Institutions) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month at Central Office.

PI (Public Information) meets at 6:00 p.m. on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Central Office.

Facilities Committee meets at 6:00 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month at Central Office. No meeting in October.

**Donations by Group
October 2009**

	Oct 09	Sep 09	Jan - Oct 09		Oct 09	Sep 09	Jan - Oct 09
001 Sunrisers	0.00	0.00	216.00	111 Carpinteria Canalino	0.00	400.00	400.00
002 Courage To Change	0.00	100.00	100.00	112 Montecito/Carpinteria	160.00	0.00	428.96
003 Eye Opener	310.00	300.00	2,706.00	113 Sought Through Prayer & Meditation	13.00	0.00	130.75
004 Monday At A Time	249.93	0.00	1,011.70	114 Schooner Group	50.00	0.00	343.00
005 Noon Step Study	0.00	0.00	9.00	115 Eleventh Step Meditation	0.00	0.00	193.00
006 Start Your Week Right	160.00	0.00	540.00	117 Way Of Life	0.00	0.00	750.00
007 Sound Off	0.00	30.00	30.00	120 Sat. Morn. Home Boys	0.00	283.00	1,077.60
010 Foundation Group	0.00	0.00	313.77	122 Came to Believe Candlelight	0.00	0.00	50.00
011 Sundowner Group	0.00	0.00	350.00	125 On Awakening	154.00	0.00	154.00
013 New Pair Of Glasses	100.00	0.00	100.00	130 Saturday Night Sobriety	72.00	0.00	216.00
014 El Montecito Saturday Night	0.00	0.00	100.00	133 Action Participation	0.00	147.95	520.78
019 Onward & Upward	40.00	0.00	384.00	139 It's A Hell Of A Deal	0.00	297.60	663.60
020 Cambridge Group	0.00	0.00	100.00	140 Gay Discussion, Sunday	0.00	0.00	80.00
021 Summerland Monday Group	0.00	0.00	432.19	144 Back To Basics, Young People	90.00	0.00	437.96
022 There Is A Solution	120.00	0.00	447.00	145 The How And Why Of It	24.60	0.00	166.20
023 For Women Only	0.00	100.00	242.40	148 San Ysidro	67.25	0.00	151.25
024, Mesa-Singleness of Purpose	0.00	40.00	160.00	150 Goleta Sun. Night Speaker	0.00	0.00	151.60
026 Carpinteria Study Group	0.00	0.00	99.00	153 Happy Destiny	249.20	0.00	812.70
034 Women of Change	0.00	0.00	127.10	163 Mustard Seed	0.00	0.00	125.00
035 12 & 12 Study, Tues.	160.00	0.00	540.00	164 Men Who Have Lost Their Legs	218.00	200.00	1,808.00
045 Alternative Group	0.00	0.00	453.60	165 Junkyard Dogs	225.00	270.00	895.00
047 Tuesday Men's Stag	108.00	0.00	504.00	166 Serenity Sisters	0.00	0.00	105.03
051 Men's Group At St. Mary's	54.00	0.00	248.00	170 Barefoot Group	0.00	25.00	167.00
053 Both Oars In The Water	160.00	0.00	540.00	177 Key Group	0.00	0.00	1,960.00
055 Staying Alive	70.00	0.00	565.00	180 Thursday Ladies Night	0.00	0.00	110.00
062 Do The Steps Or Die	0.00	0.00	75.33	181 Keep Coming Back Group	344.25	0.00	1,466.71
064 Women's Serenity Group	0.00	0.00	173.61	182 Just the Black Print	0.00	0.00	68.00
067 Rigorous Honesty	119.78	313.20	1,138.89	183 Summerland/Montecito, Thurs.	350.00	0.00	1,060.00
068 Stepping Stones	144.50	0.00	292.70	186 Sunday Night Alternative, NH III	0.00	0.00	189.00
070 Success Group	0.00	0.00	90.00	187 Turning Point	0.00	0.00	50.00
074 Casa Serena (BB Study)	0.00	0.00	56.00	191 Men on a Mission	0.00	0.00	104.00
076 11th Step	160.00	0.00	540.00	197 Big Book Comes Alive Women's	0.00	0.00	176.00
079 Harbor Group	146.00	94.75	967.40	200 Anonymous Donations	0.00	0.00	103.23
083 Sober Students, Tues Eve	0.00	0.00	100.00	201 Birthday Donations	0.00	175.00	3,023.00
084, 83 - 87 Group	145.00	120.00	1,232.48	202 Supporting Members	690.00	592.82	11,876.69
089 Here & Now	0.00	0.00	180.00	204 Memorial Fund	0.00	50.00	1,450.00
093 Into Action, Thurs	0.00	0.00	270.00	207 Gratitude Month	168.54	0.00	220.49
094 Questions & Answers	0.00	0.00	39.62	210 Convention Income	0.00	0.00	2,706.00
097 Almost Saints	200.00	100.00	1,005.00	211 Rent Received	158.00	162.00	1,300.55
099 Sink Or Swim	160.00	0.00	540.00	212 Special Events	0.00	0.00	3,685.00
100 Student of Life	0.00	40.00	40.00				
					\$5,641.05	\$3,841.32	\$56,435.89

Central Office
1213 State Street, Suite H
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 962-3332

