

Steps 4 and 5: Fearless Moral Inventory Shared with God and Another Human Being



“Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.”

Before you can change behaviors and attitudes, you need to know what needs to change.

Your personal inventory must be:

- **Honest & Fearless** - By acknowledging ALL of your faults you take steps to correct them.
- **Searching** - Examine and write down your thoughts, words, and deeds.
- **Moral** - Weigh those thoughts, words, and deeds against an objective standard of what is right against your own selfish desires.

A powerful Step 3 catapulted me into “great” sobriety. It almost felt like I needn’t go any further. For days, weeks, and even months, bolstered by that step, there was no thought of a beer. But, this did not keep me from visiting a few bar-rooms where I had done a lot of drinking. I soon realized that loading up on diet cokes in a dive “ain’t” no life. The next time I went to the bar the owner asked me if I wanted a beer. I quickly said, “No thanks, I don’t drink!” But, a place inside me *wanted* a beer. What happened to the power of that third step? Self-will run riot, that’s what!

It was time to do a searching and fearless moral inventory, quickly and thoroughly! I could no longer rest on my third step laurels. All that baggage that had been bouncing around in my head for so long went down on paper. And, to my surprise, it wasn’t depressing, it was refreshing. I carried around my 4th step work with me for weeks. I wanted badly to “spill it all” to a priest. I had been going to a wonderful Catholic Church and there is where I was to reveal my true shortcomings.

I *remember well* the evening of reconciliation. I was standing behind a few parishioners, waiting for my turn at the confessional. They were in and out somewhat quickly, unlike me. First, I told the priest that I wasn’t a confirmed Catholic, and then, I told him I wasn’t an ****shole**. Then, I had to back up and just, as they say, “tell it like it is”.

This kind man listened at length to the exact nature of my wrongs and I knew that I could hold nothing back. It was by far the lengthiest confession he had heard that day. Though I am prone to go on and on with excuses and justifications, I went forward with the wrongs, careful not to twist them into “poor me” or “if you only knew”. He said it was a beautiful reconciliation. And, I felt good. For the moment, I think I felt the “eternal sunshine of the spotless mind”. But, it was not to last and it shouldn’t. Life’s just too real to be poetry all the time. So, on to the next steps I went. I even plan start them over. I love AA and the twelve steps. Robin B.

Words On the Wall! When I came into my first meeting, one of the first things I noticed were all the picture frames hanging on the walls. I looked at them and saw that they contained many words and phrases. The significance of these were not at all clear to me then. Of course, over that first year, many AA members would point to one of these sayings and read it very solemnly to me, looking deep into my eyes, hoping against hope, that I would understand how important these “slogans” were to my recovery. To say I was very skeptical is a huge understatement.

During the years, I have learned they were, bottom line, absolutely right about each and every one of these slogans. I have learned these spiritual truths sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. Now, these slogans are part of my AA “tool kit”. I can pick them up and use them to increase my serenity, hope, and faith at any time. All it takes is honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness on my part. I get the “opportunity” to practice using these slogans in my life very frequently! The words on the wall have become my **Words to Live By!**

What is your favorite slogan? Please write an article declaring the “when, where, why, and how” your slogan became the most meaningful to you. Your “favorite slogan” article will be printed in the next issue of “The Message”. Submit article to: message@intergroup5.org

12 STEP SLOGANS

COUNSELINGRECOVERY.COM

One day at a time

This too shall pass

Live and let live

First things first

How important is it

Just for today

Easy does it

Let go and let God

Go to any lengths

Act as if

Let it begin with me

Progress not perfection

5th Step Promises! “Once we have taken this step, withholding nothing, we are delighted. - We can look the world in the eye. - We can be alone at perfect peace and ease. - Our fears fall from us. - We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator. - We may have had certain spiritual beliefs, but now we begin to have a spiritual experience. - The feeling that the drink problem has disappeared will often come strongly. - We feel we are on the Broad Highway walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.” (AA Big Book, p. 75)
The results of the 5th Step are serenity and a consciousness of God preparing us for the next steps.



Upon Returning Home - A Quiet Hour Prayer: *God, Thank you for giving me the strength, faith, and courage I needed to get through my 5th Step. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for helping me to know you better, by showing me what has been blocking me from you. Father, please show me if I have omitted anything and help me to honestly see if my work is solid so far. Are the stones of the arch, through which I shall walk a free person, properly in place? Now, I listen.*

The Intergroup 5 Hotline Saved My Life

Monday, July 6, 1998... I remember it well. I was hung-over (imagine that!) and called the AA Hotline. A woman with a cheerful voice answered the phone. I asked, “Ugh, can you tell me where to find an AA meeting on a Tuesday night?” She gave me some options and then said, “There’s also a women’s meeting tonight that I attend.” “Are you going tonight?”, I almost shouted. Her name was Pat. I was so terrified. I kept asking her if she would meet me at the meeting. She reassured me she would be there.

So, at 5:45 pm that night, I was wondering around the parking lot of Grace Lutheran Church. I saw a woman and in a squeaky voice that sounded like a cross between a hyena and a grasshopper, I asked, “Do you know where the AA meeting is?” Her reply, ‘Are you new?’ (Duh, how could you tell?) “Yes”, I managed to reply, “and I’m meeting Pat here.”

I was so nervous, but it was important for me to appear hip and cool. I’m sure that’s how I came off. This stranger took my hand, led me into the room and introduced me to Pat. I wish I could say that July 5, 1998 is my sobriety date. It’s not. It is October 4, 1999. The only thing I did right that first year (and three months) was I kept coming back.

Sadly, Pat died a few years ago. But, she was sober when she took her last breath. She loved the fact that she was part of my story. To this day, I thank God for Pat answering the hotline on that muggy summer day. April C.

AA Groups in Jails and Prisons: A “Pink Can” Success Story! AA meetings were started in the United States at San Quentin in 1942. The start of AA prison meetings in the Tallahassee area began in 1995 at the Wakulla Correctional Institution (CI) with Curt D., Tommy H., and Diz T. It was November of 2013 when my sponsor “suggested” that I get involved in service work as an AA Corrections Volunteer. I had 6 months and 2 weeks of sobriety when I first “carried the message” to inmates at that same institution. Today, AA meetings are held at many correctional facilities in the area. Members of AA (women) take meetings to: Franklin, Jefferson, and Leon County Jails; and Gadsden CI in Quincy. And, AA members (men) take meetings to Franklin, Jefferson, Leon, Wakulla County Jails; Franklin, Wakulla, Leon, and Taylor CI’s; and the Gadsden Re-entry Center. Overall, AA meetings are held 7 days a week and, for the most part, in the evenings after 6pm.

In the county jails, people are serving sentences of less than 1 year. Meetings at the jails are led by AA Corrections Volunteers and focus on Steps 1-3, through reading the literature and discussion. At the state prisons, people are serving sentences greater than 1 year. Meetings at the prisons include reading from the literature, discussion, 12 step workshops, and meditation. Inmates, who have worked the steps, chair these meetings in many cases. Many of the inmates have AA experience from other correctional facilities and/or have been “in the rooms” of AA in other cities. A favorite story of mine is of the inmate who asked his AA sponsor, “What if I cannot make a direct amend?” His sponsor said, “Become a living amend by changing your behavior toward other people from this point forward”. This spiritual lesson, given to someone who was incarcerated, behind bars, has made a profound difference in my thinking about Steps 8 and 9. Corrections service work has allowed me the opportunity to help other alcoholics less fortunate than myself and to learn many needed lessons.

The “Pink Can” Fund was started by Mike. L. of Lloyd so that AA books and other materials could be made available to those individuals in jails and prisons in the Tallahassee area. If you see a “pink can” at a meeting, please donate what you can. Old copies of the “Grapevine” newsletter are in great demand, also.

Want to become an AA Corrections Volunteer? Contact: message@intergroup5.org Tom M.

From the Book Shelf: (A continuation of the book review from the last issue) [Living Sober](#) - the second part of this book discusses the primary tools of the AA program: > Reading and re-reading the “Big Book” and “12 & 12” as *there is always something we’ve never seen in there before!*
 > Meetings and more meetings (newcomer, open discussion, closed discussion, and step)
 > Living the 12 Steps
 > Prayer and Meditation
 > Participating in the Fellowship and Service.
 A good read! Mick E.