

Steps for Spiritual Growth

Humility

James 4:6-10 (NIV)

(4:6) The Scripture says: "**God opposes the proud** but **gives grace to the humble.**"

(7) **Submit yourselves, then, to God.** [*Place yourselves under God's authority, give yourselves completely to him, and let him work his will in you*]. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. [*resist the devil, stand firm against him, yell a loud no him, and he will run away from you*].

(8) Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded [*Come close to God saying yes to him and he will come close to you. Quit playing around with sin and clean up your lives. Fill your hearts with God alone and He will purify your hearts and minds. Then you will be pure and true to him; your loyalty will not be divided between God and a sinful culture*].

(9) Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom [*As you draw near to God, there will be grieving, weeping and sorrow for the way you have lived. When you see what you have done, your laughter will change to sadness and your joy into shame for your sins. It is time to get real serious with God*].

(10) **Humble yourselves** before the Lord, and he will lift you up [*So, get down on your face before God; it's the only way to get on your feet. Then He will lift*].

The Book of James has no corner on the Biblical injunction to be humble. But the importance of James to Dr. Bob and Bill W. and those in early AA suggest that the verse in James on humility probably had an impact on the Big Book's frequent mention of humility. The Big Book's Fourth Edition is filled with exhortations to be humble, with stress on humbling one's self before God, and with suggestions for humbly asking His help.

Humility carries the idea of someone who is not proud or arrogant; does not have an attitude self-sufficiency; one who is modest, submissive and meek.

Read **James 4:6** ...

The Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

- What does God give to the humble?
- Why does God give grace to the humble?
- Who does God oppose and why?
- What does it mean to humble ourselves before God?

Read **James 4:10**...

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up [*So, get down on your face before God; it's the only way to get on your feet. Then He will lift*].

- What is the result of humbling ourselves before the Lord?
- What do you think being lifted up by the Lord means?

This is part of Bill W's story. "The real significance of my experience in the Cathedral burst upon me. For a brief moment, I had needed and wanted God. There had been a humble willingness to have Him with me--and He came. But soon the sense of His presence had been blotted out by worldly clamors, mostly those within myself. And so it had been ever since. How blind I had been. At the hospital I was separated from alcohol for the last time. Treatment seemed wise, for I showed signs of delirium tremens. There I humbly offered myself to God, as I then understood Him, to do with me

as He would. I placed myself unreservedly under His care and direction. I admitted for the first time that of myself I was nothing; that without Him I was lost. I ruthlessly faced my sins and became willing to have my new-found Friend take them away, root and branch. I have not had a drink since.” [BB, p13]

- Have you ever needed and wanted God but wasn't willing to offer yourself to him? What happen?
- What did Bill do when he finally made the decision to offer himself to God?
- What did Bill admit?
- What did Bill have to face and do?
- What was the result?

The Bible says in **James 1:21 (NIV)**

Therefore, get rid of moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent [*get rid of any garbage in your lives both inside that is unseen and outside that is seen*] and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you [*submit your lives to God's message that has the power to save you*].

- What does it mean to humbly accept the word (God's word) planted in you?
- What will God's Word do for you if you humble accept it?

The Bible says in **Isaiah 66:2 (NLT)** ...

My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! "I am pleased with those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word.

- What does God say about those who have humble and contrite hearts? (Contrite means to show sincere remorse; to be filled with a sense of guilt and the desire for forgiveness.)
- What do you think it means to have God pleased with us?

Read what Bill W. says about trusting, relying and humbling ourselves to God. "We are now on a different basis of trusting and relying upon God. We trust infinite God rather than our finite selves. We are in the world to play the role He assigns. Just to the extent that we do as we think He would have us, and **humbly** rely on Him, does He enable us to match calamity with serenity. We never apologize to anyone for depending upon our Creator. We can laugh at those who think spirituality the way of weakness. Paradoxically, it is the way of strength. The verdict of the ages is that faith means courage. All men of faith have courage. They trust their God. We never apologize for God. Instead we let him demonstrate, through us, what He can do. We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be. At once, we commence to outgrow fear." [BB, p68]

- What does it mean to trust and rely on God rather than ourselves?
- When we do what we think He would have us to and humbly rely on him, what is the result?
- Why don't we apologize to anyone for depending on God?
- Why do some people think that spirituality is the way of weakness?
- What does God do through us?

The Bible says in **Micah 6:8 (NIV)** ...

He [that is God] has showed [and told] you, O man, what is good [and right]. What does the LORD require of you [and what does he demand of you and what is he looking for in you]? [This is what he requires] To act justly [by doing what is fair; by seeing that justice is done] and to love mercy [to be compassionate and loyal in your love for God and other people] and to walk humbly with your God [while living in obedience to him].

- From this passage, what three things does God require of us?
- What does it mean to walk humbly with God?

The Bible says in **Ephesians 4:2-3 (NIV)** ...

^(4:2) Be completely **humble** and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ⁽³⁾ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit [*try your best to let God's Spirit keep your hearts united*] through the bond of peace [*we are united by living at peace with each other*].

- How do we show humility and gentleness to others?
- Why should we be patient with others?
- How do we keep unity with others?

Read this story that Bill tells in the Big Book. "In this book you will read the experience of a man who thought he was an atheist. His story is so interesting that some of it should be told now. His change of heart was dramatic, convincing, and moving. Our friend was a minister's son. He attended church school, where he became rebellious at what he thought an overdose of religious education. For years thereafter he was dogged by trouble and frustration. Business failure, insanity, fatal illness, suicide these calamities in his immediate family embittered and depressed him. Post-war disillusionment, ever more serious alcoholism, impending mental and physical collapse, brought him to the point to self-destruction. One night, when confined in a hospital, he was approached by an alcoholic who had known a spiritual experience. Our friend's gorge rose as he bitterly cried out: "If there is a God, He certainly hasn't done anything for me!" But later, alone in his room, he asked himself this question: "Is it possible that all the religious people I have known are wrong?" While pondering the answer he felt as though he lived in hell. Then, like a thunderbolt, a great thought came. It crowded out all else: "Who are you to say there is no God?" This man recounts that he tumbled out of bed to his knees. In a few seconds he was overwhelmed by a conviction of the Presence of God. It poured over and through him with the certainty and majesty of a great tide at flood. The barriers he had built through the years were swept away. He stood in the Presence of Infinite Power and Love. He had stepped from bridge to shore. For the first time, he lived in conscious companionship with his Creator. Thus was our friend's cornerstone fixed in place. No later vicissitude has shaken it. His alcoholic problem was taken away. That very night, years ago, it disappeared. Save for a few brief moments of temptation the thought of drink has never returned; and at such times a great revulsion has risen up in him. Seemingly he could not drink even if he would. God had restored his sanity. What is this but a miracle of healing? Yet its elements are simple. Circumstances made him willing to believe. He humbly offered himself to his Maker then he knew. Even so has **God restored us all to our right minds.** To this man, the revelation was sudden. Some of us grow into it more slowly. But He has come to all who have honestly sought Him. When we drew near to Him He disclosed Himself to us!" [BB, p55-57]

- What was his background?
- Who was he approached by?
- What was his attitude when he was approached by another alcoholic who know a spiritual experience?
- What was the question he ask himself when he was alone later that day? (There are many in AA who think this)
- What was the second question he asks himself?
- What did this lead to?
- What was he overwhelmed with?
- What happen to his barriers toward God?
- What does it mean to live in a conscious companionship with your Creator?
- What happen to his alcoholic problem?
- What did God restore? What does that mean?
- God restored his sanity. What did Bill call this experience?
- What has God restored us to?
- Who does God come to?
- What happens when we draw near to God? (this sounds a lot like the King James Version of James 4:8, which was the Bible Bill W. read and which says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.")

The Bible says in **Psalms 18:27 (NIV)**

You save [rescue; deliver] the humble but bring low [humiliate and bring down] those whose eyes are haughty [the proud; those with conceited looks].

- What does God do for the humble?
- What does God do for those with haughty eyes?

The Bible says in **Psalm 147:6 (NIV)**

The LORD sustains [supports; helps; gives relief; lifts up; defends] the humble but casts [brings down] the wicked to the ground [because they reject him].

- What does God do for the humble?
- What does God do for those who reject him?

In the following paragraph, Bill W. uses two quotes from the Bible. The first is from Matthew 6:10 (King James Version) where Jesus prays, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” and the second is found in James 2:26 (King James Version) where James, the brother of Jesus writes, “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” We just read about what God does for the humbly. Read how Bill W addresses the subject of being humble.

“As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily, for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works - it really does. We alcoholics are undisciplined. So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined. But this is not all. There is action and more action. "Faith without works is dead." [BB, p87-88]

- What do we do when we get agitated or doubtful?
- Who is running the show in our lives?
- Whose will do we want to be done in our lives?
- What happens when we try to arrange life to suit ourselves?
- Who do we let discipline us? What was the simple way Bill outlined for allowing God to discipline us?
- Why is faith out works dead?