

THE LAST 161 WORDS

of the First 164 Pages

RICK W.

A Clear and Adequate Presentation 

The Last 161 Words

of the First 164 Pages

Rick W.

This book is dedicated to each and every person who has touched my life
in sobriety to help make me the man I am today.

To the sponsors I've had, the amazing sponsees that have allowed me to
share my love of our Twelve Steps with them, every single member of
A.A. who has given me permission to trudge our Road of Happy Destiny
along side them, and most of all to a God of my understanding that loves
me right where I am today and has made me His loving expression
here on this Earth.

Light and blessings to each one of you and may you find the depth and
weight of peace and love I've found being a member of this
wonderful Fellowship.

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The thoughts found in this book are nothing more than the experience of one alcoholic - a single member of Alcoholics Anonymous and do not represent the thoughts of or speak for the entire A.A. Fellowship. Rick's sponsor taught him that, *"Experience is not opinion and therefore not open to debate. You can debate my opinion all you want to - but you can't debate my experience because it happened to me."*
(Thanks Chris D.)

Many thanks to Kimberly T. for editing this book with love and care.

To contact Rick W., visit <https://www.takethe12.org/contact/>

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While this book is a reflection on the writings found in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (lovingly referred to as the, "Big Book" by A.A. members) - the author acknowledges it is not affiliated to or endorsed by A.A.'s General Service Conference, the General Service Board of Trustees of Alcoholics Anonymous, or any of its subsidiary corporations.

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"I have been given a quiet place in bright sunshine."

- Bill W., *"The Next Frontier - Emotional Sobriety"*

- *The Language of the Heart*

"I don't have to like it, but I do have to accept it for being exactly as it's supposed to be at this moment. Once I accept it, **complaining about it becomes obsolete.**"

- Rick W

"Trust in God is not a sliding scale – it's a toggle switch. Either it's ON or it's OFF."

- Rick W

"There's never an end to the help that's needed, only an end of the **willingness to help.**"

- Rick W.

"The **biggest enemy I have** is the noise that lives between my left ear and my right ear."

- Rick W.

This book is for every soul who has trudged (*walked with purpose*) **the road of Happy Destiny.**

Foreword

The original title of this book was intended to be *Reflections on A Vision For You*, but when I sat down and finally started fleshing it out, I felt I wanted to call it something a little less grandiose. One day as I was reading the content from which this book was drawn it hit me... "*The last 161 words of the first 164 pages of the Big Book contains all Twelve of our Steps!*" And so it was.

The last two paragraphs of Chapter 11, "A Vision For You" in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, have always been my favorite passage in the book. For much of my sobriety, each time I read them (*or heard them read*), I could feel tears welling up in my eyes. I was never quite sure why but I always felt *something* very deeply on each occasion.

On May 26, 2016, I was living in New York City and was preparing to fly home to Texas the next day to visit my mother, who was battling cancer. That morning I sat down, pulled out my Big Book, and went to page 164 and read the last 161 words again.

As I read, I noticed some very explicit **promises**, **prayers**, **actions**, and **warnings** hiding in plain sight. I began writing down what I saw in the hope that what I found, might one day be able to help others working our program of action in the way it had helped me.

- God bless! Rick W.

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Chapter 1



“Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little.

The Step Connection: Step 7

- Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

This is both a *Promise* and a *Prayer*. The pure humility found in a statement like this conveys the clarity of Bill W.’s true understanding of the obstinate alcoholic nature. WHY? Because he made our 12 Steps suggestions and not mandates. He knew what he was doing (*or God knew what God was doing through Bill*).

The *promise* lies in the fact that when I admit to myself that in and of myself I know nothing, I am given to the experience of learning the true meaning of humility - *the desire to seek and do God's will* - as Bill outlined in Step 7 in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

The *prayer* in this passage is an acknowledgment to God that I'm grateful for the humility I've found, realizing and admitting just how little I really do know about myself and the spiritual malady that I'm afflicted with.



Chapter 2



“God will constantly disclose more to you and to us.”

The Step Connection: 1st ½ of Step 11

- Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood God...

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

What an incredible *Promise* Bill gave me here. God cannot disclose more to me if I'm not actively seeking to improve my conscious contact with Him. I get to go deeper as I TALK to God through prayer and LISTEN to God through meditation. I have the talkin' thing down (*and those who know me well know that's true*) – but the listenin' thing? I still have some work to do on that one. Thank God I'm still open to teachable moments.

Just about the time I think (*which is my first mistake*) I have it all down, God discloses Himself to me through His kids. I'm continually being taught taught that the biggest problem I'll ever have is separation from the Divine. That old saying of "*more will be revealed*" is completely true so long as I remain open and receptive to God's clear cut direction given to me through His beloved.



Chapter 3



“Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick.”

The Step Connection: 2nd ½ of Step 11

- ... praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Here's an *Action*. Each day as I wake up, I ask God to show me how I can be of maximum service to Him and to His kids in both thought and action. I believe that God's will for me is to be of service to Him. You can bet if I'm being of service to God and His kids, I'm less apt to be of service to my spiritual illness. That is to say, to the noise that lives between my left ear and my right ear.

When I take the time to ask God to remove my pride and ego (*which by the way is founded in fear-fear of not getting something I want, or fear of losing something I demand*), it gives me the space to focus on what I can do in that moment for the one who may be suffering. Getting out of my head and considering the needs of others is one of the best ways I know to find myself at perfect peace and ease.



Chapter 4



“The answers will come, if your own house is in order.

The Step Connection: Step 4

- Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

This is both a *Promise* and a *Warning*. Bill *promises* me that I'll be given the answers if I clean up my own side of the street. I can't know what needs to be in order in my own house if I'm unwilling to take stock of my liabilities and identify those character defects that have so often led me to pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization.

The *Warning* here is implicit. It's pretty clear what I will receive IF I do my own house cleaning - the answers. If I choose not to take stock of the flaws in my character - I won't get the clarity I so deeply desire. I've spent a lifetime spinning my wheels, complaining about the continued insanity in my life prior to coming to the rooms - never once doing a thorough inventory of my assets and liabilities. Who knew that when I humbly asked God to remove the liabilities I was holding onto, it would make space for more assets?



Chapter 5



“But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven’t got.”

The Step Connection: Step 10

- Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Here’s yet another *Warning*. There is no way I could ever hope to be of maximum service to God and His kids if I’m not willing to constantly be aware of where I still need to grow. I then need to promptly admit to both myself and to whoever else that I am wrong when I am wrong. I get to give it away only if I have IT to give away.

When I think of the number of times I’ve sat in meetings of A.A. and spewed forth whatever noise was in my head (that had no connection to a program of spiritual health) just because I wanted to look good, I become acutely aware of just how dangerous that can be to the newcomer who may be listening to me. If I don’t have it - I need to stop thinking I can give it away. This is just one example of the 100 forms of self-delusion that can be of great detriment to the suffering alcoholic who needs the truth if I don’t heed this warning.



Chapter 6



“See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.”

The Step Connection: Steps 2 & 6

- Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Here’s a great *Promise*. I’m promised that great events will come to pass for me IF my relationship with God is right. When I came to believe that God could restore me to sanity (*soundness of mind*), it was in that moment I stopped believing “I” could restore me to sanity or “YOU” could restore me to sanity. As Bill shared in his *Grapevine* article, “The Next Frontier – Emotional Sobriety”... *“If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God’s help, continually surrender these hobbling demands.”*



Chapter 7



“Abandon yourself to God, as you understand God.”

The Step Connection: Step 3

- Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood God.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Here’s another *Action*. I don’t know about you, but I totally understand the concept of abandoning myself to something – to alcohol. I gave my life over to it like it was my God. In the same manner and with the same ease, I’m asked to simply abandon myself to a Power that continues to prove itself to be greater than I am. That’s an action that has gifted me more dividends than I could’ve ever dreamed of or hoped for.

A decision is nothing more than a resolution reached after careful consideration. Considering the life I led before coming to the rooms of A.A., making a decision to let go of the reigns and let God take control was a breath of fresh air. I could finally breathe a sigh of relief through the simple act of surrender.



Chapter 8



“Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows.”

The Step Connection: Steps 1 & 5

- We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
- Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

More *Action*. Do I want to admit my faults to God and to my fellows? *I don't think so!* I don't even want to admit them to myself, much less to anyone else. But yet – I am willing to go to any lengths today to relieve myself of this seemingly hopeless state of mind & body – this “ism”. I heard recently that it's not alcohol**wasm** – it's alcohol**ism**.

Admitting my powerlessness over _____ was not an exciting prospect for me. Yet, all I had to do was look at the life I'd built to see just how unmanageable it really was. Learning what true honesty was in Step 1 and admitting to myself that I simply couldn't run my own life certainly helped me become willing to admit my wrongs to God and another human being in Step 5.



Chapter 9



“Clear away the wreckage of your past.”

The Step Connection: Steps 8 & 9

- Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Yet another *action*. I had to learn the hard way that these two steps are not about getting back into the good graces of those I've wronged. It's not about what I receive by doing it. It's about being willing to once again do the footwork and leave the results up to God. These steps don't tell me to clear away the wreckage of my past and while doing so, point out where everyone else has been wrong. It's about suiting up, showing up, and cleaning up my side of the street.

My willingness to get honest about the hurt and harm I caused others, along with a sincere desire to make it right, gave me an understanding of the true purpose of Steps 8 & 9—to be of maximum service to God and to His kids.



Chapter 10



“Give freely of what you find and join us.”

The Step Connection: 2nd 1/3 of Step 12

- ...we tried to carry this message to alcoholics

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

Still more *Action*. Bill suggests I give freely. Freely without expectation of return. Have you ever felt the joy of giving something anonymously? I have and I must admit, it was kind of strange. At first, there was part of me (*my ego*) that wanted to be recognized for the action. But when I finally woke up to that piece of the prayer of St. Francis where it says, “*it is in the giving that I receive....*” I finally realized what giving freely was all about.

Giving freely, with no expectations of any kind is an experience I'm glad I haven't missed. It's the antithesis to the root of my problem: *selfishness and self-centeredness*. Getting down to the causes and conditions of my constant failures before coming to the rooms (*and sometimes IN the rooms*) helped me begin to have that spiritual awakening I strive for each and every day.



Chapter 11



“We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.”

The Step Connection: 3rd 1/3 of Step 12

- ...and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

What a wonderful *Promise*. In this sentence, Bill tells me I'm not alone nor do I ever have to be alone. If I follow the simple design of these last 161 words of the first 164 pages – I will always have you by my side. Someone who understands. Someone who knows the struggles and rewards because you have walked this road too. One definition of *trudge* means “*to walk with purpose.*” As long as I remain humble, teachable, willing, and constantly connected to God, I will be placed in a position of neutrality, safe and protected. *Switzerland Baby!!*

The *Fellowship of the Spirit* is the fellowship I find with God and His kids. Walking with purpose down that road has been the greatest journey I've ever taken.



Chapter 12



“May God bless you and keep you—until then.”

The Step Connection: 1st 1/3 of Step 12

- Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps...

Promises, Prayers, Actions and Warnings:

A final *Promise*. God WILL bless me and keep me on that Road of Happy Destiny so long as I'm continually willing to practice and apply the 12 simple suggestions given to me. The promise deep within the spiritual awakening (*or spiritual experience*) is that I'll have a "*personality change*" sufficient to bring about recovery from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body. I will become a changed man, a different man, a recovered man (*not cured - recovered*). I remember being told early on that "the same man will drink again." While that phrase is not in our basic text, it's a reminder that if I want the many gifts of sobriety, I must continue my work in becoming a different person. To remain sober as well as have the ability to serve God and His kids, I can't be the selfish and self-centered person I was before walking into my first meeting in 1986. How grateful I am that God has changed me—for that change has given me a *life beyond my wildest dreams!*



Conclusion

I heard a speaker once say that her sponsor told her the most important part of the book are "the black parts" (*the words on the page*) and not to read between the lines. The reflections found in this book are less about reading between the lines than they are about sharing my experience with them.

Being willing to listen to the experience, strength, and hope of those that have come before me has been invaluable to my recovery. The thoughts I've expressed here are my own thoughts. They are not necessarily how others have experienced the words on the page. I don't claim to know it all or have the final answer on our literature, but I'm clear that by applying the words of the Big Book to my life, I have experienced a life that is self-sacrificing instead of self-serving.

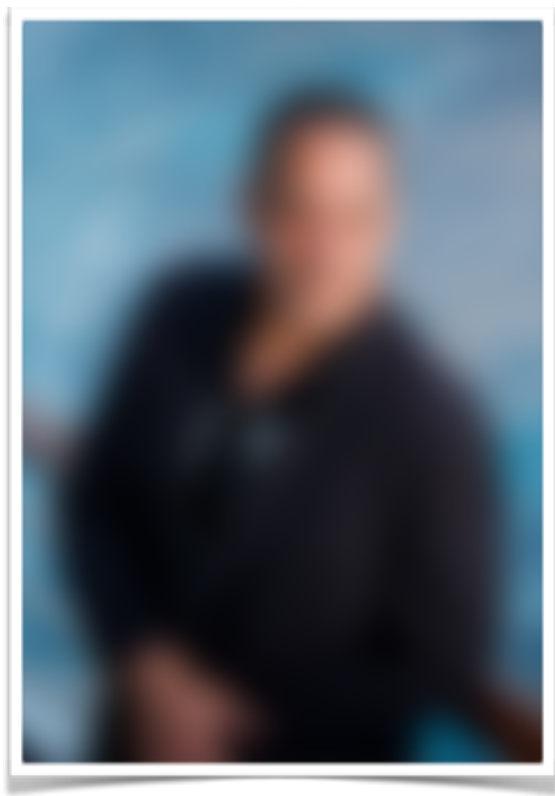
I've found that when I open myself up to teachable moments and allow the literature to cover me, dreams can come true and life can take on new meaning. It is my hope that you can find the same.

Thank God they wrote it down!

God bless you on your journey...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "R" and a trailing flourish.

About the Author



Rick W. walked into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous in July 1986 and had no idea how his life was about to change. After experiencing some of the "*100 forms of self-delusion*" talked about in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* while in the rooms, he was able to get rigorously honest with himself, God, and his fellows. As a result, his sobriety date is November 17, 1987 and since that time, he has devoted himself to providing a clear and adequate presentation of Alcoholics Anonymous-our program of recovery for the still suffering alcoholic.