

**The “Work” of the Twelve Steps in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.**  
**From “Admitted We were Powerless” to “Abandon Yourself to God”.**

A Workshop on “How the Twelve Steps Work” in Alcoholics Anonymous,  
from October 7 through December 30, 2024.

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, Mo. USA

(All page numbers cited from Alcoholics Anonymous, Fourth Edition, unless otherwise noted.

October 7.	Study Overview:	From “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”.
October 14.	Step One:	“We Admitted”.
October 21.	Step Two:	We “Came to Believe”.
October 28.	Step Three:	We “Made a Decision”.
November 4.	Step Four, <i>Resentments</i> :	We “Made a Moral Inventory”.
November 11.	Step Four, <i>Fears and Sexual Conduct</i> :	We “Made a Moral Inventory”, con’t.
November 18.	Step Five:	We “Admitted” to God, ourself, another ...
November 25.	Steps Six and Seven:	We “Were Entirely Ready”; “Humbly Asked”.
December 2.	Step Eight:	We “Made a List” and “Became Willing”.
December 9.	Step Nine:	We “Made Direct Amends”.
December 16.	Step Ten:	We “Continued ... to Admit”.
	Step Eleven:	We “Sought God’s Will and God’s Power”.
December 23.	Step Twelve:	“We Tried to Carry this Message”.
December 30.	Step Twelve:	“We Tried to Practice these Principles”.

*I will learn to live in peace and comfort with my powerlessness and liberating abandon to God!*

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**Study Overview: From “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”.**

Our spiritual program of recovery begins with *admitting powerlessness*: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.” (p. 59)

Our spiritual program of recovery uses *abandon as the fundamental requirement for our spiritual recovery*: “Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.” (p. 164)

We admit we are “**powerless**” over alcohol as part of the First Step in our recovery. And, in Steps Two through Twelve in our text book, we discover that *we are often “powerless” over more than merely the physical allergy and physical affect on us of alcohol*:

- “The alcoholic ... has no effective mental defense against the first drink.” (p. 43)
- “... stop doubting the power of God. Our ideas did not work.” (p. 52)
- “We could not wish [resentments] away any more than alcohol.” (p. 66)
- “... self confidence ... didn’t fully solve the fear problem, or any other.” (p. 68)
- “We asked God mold our ideals ...” (p. 69)
- “... God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him.” (p. 71)
- “If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us ...” (p. 76)
- “Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding.” (p. 76)
- “If we haven’t the will to do this, we ask until it comes.” (p. 76)
- “He saw that he had to place the outcome in God’s hands ...” (p. 80)
- “... God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” (p. 84)
- “... Thy will (not mine) be done.” (p. 85)
- “But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God.” (p. 116)
- “We realize we know only a little.” (p. 164)

Consider the term “**abandon**”. To “abandon” in the Big Book means more than simply “admit” or even “surrender”. *With our choice to abandon, there are no “ifs, ands or buts”*:

- “My wife and I abandoned ourselves ... to the idea ...” (p. 15)
- “... we imagined we had abandoned the God idea entirely.” (p. 45)
- “This sort of thinking had to be abandoned.” (p. 48)
- “We asked His protection and care with complete abandon.” (p. 59)
- “... that we could at last abandon ourselves utterly to Him.” (p. 63)
- “Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.” (p. 164)

Consider the term “**liberation**”, the “act of setting someone free from imprisonment”:

- “... a spiritual liberation ... rose above their problems.” (p. 55)

We ask God *as we understood God* in Step Three to “relieve me of the bondage of self”.

We decide to “abandon ourselves utterly” to God. *We seek liberation from our own self-will!*

In this study, we see how the Twelve Steps in Alcoholics Anonymous “work” us in the “Thread of Recovery” from “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”. *We also seek to understand the “liberating” effect in, and on, our lives of the harder-to-grasp, spiritual aspects of our Twelve Step process of “restoration”, such as “fourth dimension”; “sixth sense”; “Spirit”.*

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**Study Overview: From “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”. (Con’t)**

My first personal experience with Alcoholics Anonymous was the “feeling” I had at my first AA meeting. I did not realize it then, but what I felt was the unexplainable mystery of the spiritual “Fellowship of the Spirit”—the inexpressible glow of the “program of attraction”.

“The terms ‘spiritual experience’ and ‘spiritual awakening’ are used many times in this book which, upon careful reading, shows that the personality change sufficient to bring about recovery from alcoholism has manifested itself among us in many different forms.” (Appendix II, p. 567)

We begin to hope in Step Two “that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity”. As the Twelve Steps “work” us, our restoration to sanity—our sufficient “personality change”—cannot always be understood or explained within the limitations of our three-dimensional, five senses world. Some examples of these vital spiritual personality change are:

- “... the Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.” (p. xxvii)
- “... something more than human power ... produce the essential psychic change.” (p. xxix)
- “Something has happened to you I don’t understand.” (p. 14)
- “... we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence ...” (p. 25)
- “... emotional displacements and rearrangements [of] ideas, emotions and attitudes.” (p. 27)
- “We begin to feel the nearness of our Creator ... hand in hand with the Spirit ...” (p. 75)
- “We have entered the world of the Spirit.” (p. 84)
- “We have begun to develop this vital sixth sense.” (p. 85)
- “We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit.” (p. 164)

These essential spiritual aspects of our recovery are not as easily understood or applied as some of the “how to” instructions in our book. I have often overlooked their vital necessity to my recovery. ***So, as I accept my powerlessness and abandon my self to God:***

- I will “let go” of my *illusion* that I am not powerless;
- I will “let go” of my *delusion* that my life is not unmanageable;
- I will “let go” of my *obsessive* desire to control everything and everyone to feel safe;
- I will realize that I’m not losing control of anything; I am simply letting go of my *illusion*, *delusion* and my *obsessive desire* to control everything, including uncertainty;
- I will realize that the *risk* I feel of giving up my *obsession* to control is more than offset by the *reward* of my spiritual liberation and freedom from my bondage of self;
- I will stay *aware* of the most powerful part of my liberating spiritual restoration by not trying to limit and confine my spiritual awakening to what I can understand and explain;
- I will humbly *accept* that my restoration to sanity is a life-long spiritual awakening;
- I will *act* in gratitude each day to live in liberating abandon of my self to God, so that I may “perfect and enlarge [my] spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others”. (pp. 14-15)

*I will learn to live in peace and comfort with my powerlessness and liberating abandon to God!*

**Next Time, Step One: “We admitted we were powerless ... our lives ... unmanageable.”**