

**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 Us” 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.)

Overview of the Study: From “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”.

Our spiritual program of recovery begins with: “We admitted we were powerless ...” (p. 59)

Our spiritual program of recovery continues with: “... we had to stop doubting the power of God” (p. 52); and “we had to quit playing God.” (p. 62)

And, *the fundamental requirement for our spiritual recovery is*: “... abandon ourselves utterly to [God]” (p. 63); “Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.” (p. 164)

In Steps Two through Twelve in our text book, we discover that *we are “powerless” over more than merely the physical allergy and mental obsession of alcohol.*

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”.*

Consider the term “**liberation**”, the “act of setting someone free from imprisonment”:
“... a spiritual liberation ... people who 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 “abandon ourselves utterly” to God. *We seek spiritual “liberation” from our own self-will!*

In this study, we see how the Twelve Steps in Alcoholics Anonymous “work us” with the “Thread of Recovery” from “Powerless” to “Liberating Abandon”. We participate in the work of our spiritual awakening—we learn to let God be in charge of our spiritual awakening. We 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”.

Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (p. 59)

“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at *Step Six*.” (*Answer What?*) (p. 76)

“... we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour ... we thank God ...” (p. 75)

“Carefully reading the first five proposals:

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| 1. “... we ask [God] if we have omitted anything?” | <i>Have I omitted prayer?</i> |
| 2. “Is our work solid so far?” | <i>Have I told the truth?</i> |
| 3. “Are the stones properly in place?” | <i>Have I lied?</i> |
| 4. “Have we skimmed on the cement put into the foundation?” | <i>Have I told partial truth?</i> |
| 5. “Have we tried to make mortar without sand?” | <i>Have I admitted motives?</i> |

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.” (i.e., p. 12, 28, pp. 46-47) (p. 76)

“Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can [God] now take them all—every one?” “

Resentments (*desire to blame and shame others; refusal to forgive; be a victim*).

Overly self-reliant (*fear of lack of control; control illusion; unmanageable delusion*).

Selfish inconsideration of others (*obsession to “dominate”, “retaliate” or “eliminate”*).

“If we still cling to something we will not let go (*Powerless*), we ask God to help us be willing.” (*Abandon*) (p. 76)

Am I willing to “abandon”—seek God’s help to “let go”—live without my objectionable things?

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Step Six: “Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.” (con’t)

*“Were entirely ready” in Step Six is when I admit that people, places and things threaten my deepest desires for safety, security and self-esteem—and I am **powerless** to “let go” of my resulting reactive “objectionable” feelings, thoughts and actions without God’s help.*

To be “entirely ready to have God remove” my “defects of character”, I become willing to learn to live without them; to “let go” of my “old idea” that I can change my known selfish motives and desires, the “exact nature of my wrongs”, without God’s help.

I prayed for God’s help with my “objectionable” feelings and actions in Step Four:

I now see that my anger is a “bodyguard” for my fear. When I feel fear, I now know that anger will come—to feed my “illusion of control” and make me feel safe. So, I ask God to “save me from being angry”. (p. 67) Then, I ask God “to remove my fear” and ask what God “would have [me] be”. (p. 68)

When someone won’t do what I want them to do, I don’t force my old inconsiderate self upon them. I “ask God what [I] should do about [this] specific matter”. (p. 69)

In Step Six, I let my desire to trust God become stronger than my desire to control.

I put my faith in God to the test. I risk trusting God enough to ask God to help me “let go”.

I am powerless to “let go” on my own. I abandon my “objectionable” things to God.

Observations: “Powerless” to “Abandon” in Step Six.

“... deep down in every man, woman, and child is the fundamental idea of God. It may be obscured by calamity (fear), by pomp (pride), by worship of other things (self-will run riot), but in some form or other it is there.” (p. 55)

“... faith in some kind of God was part of our make-up ... we found the Great Reality deep down within us ... it is only there that [God] may be found.” “

“If our testimony (experience, strength, hope) helps sweep away prejudice (old ideas), enables you to think honestly (Steps One, Two, Three), encourages you to search diligently within yourself (Steps Four and Five), then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway.” (See Step Five promises, p. 75) (p. 55)

“... the result was nil until we let go [of our “old ideas”] absolutely.” (p. 58)

*I must “let go” in Step Six of the “old idea” that I can change my known unhealthy, selfish actions by myself without God’s help. So, in Step Six, I **abandon** my selfish attempts to feel safe, secure and better self-esteem **to** God’s Power, God’s Love and God’s Way of life. (See Step Three prayer, p. 63)*

*I am **powerless** to let go of my objectionable things with self-reliance alone. I surrender my illusion of control. I let Step Six “work me”. I **abandon** my objectionable things **to** God.*

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Step Seven: “Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings” (p. 59)

“When ready we say something like this:

‘My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad.’ (p. 76)

*This “I am now willing” is another step forward on my spiritual path. It is my **humble** admission, acceptance and surrender to my powerlessness over changing myself.*

*This “you should have all of me” is yet another step on my spiritual path. I **humbly** abandon myself to God more deeply than before—“all of me”, the part of me I know about and the part of me I don’t know about.*

‘I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows.’ (p. 76)

*I am powerless to remove my own defects of character. I am especially powerless to remove the defects of character I don’t even know are blocking my usefulness to God and my fellows! I **humbly** abandon myself to God’s “removing Power”.*

‘Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.’ “ (p. 76)

In Step Seven, I trust God with what I know about me, and what I don’t know about me.

God’s strength helps me “stop doing the next wrong thing” (Step Six) and try to “start doing the next right thing” (Step Seven). God helps me change “from the outside in” with new, healthier, kinder, safer, less critical, less “objectionable” words and deeds.

Observations: “Powerless” to “Abandon” in Step Seven.

1. Knowing “why” God wants me to do something may satisfy my curiosity, but only by trusting God’s character (Power, Love, Way of life) am I willing to trust God’s will even when I don’t know why.
2. I am *powerless* over what I don’t know about me. I *abandon* what I don’t know about me to God’s care. I trust God with what I know and what I don’t know about me.
3. I “came to *believe*” in Steps One and Two. I decided in *faith* to seek God’s care in Step Three. I prayed in *faith* that God “could” in Steps Four, Five and Six. Now, in Step Seven, I *trust* that not only God “could” but that God “would”.

*I am **powerless** to change me “from the inside out”—to change my desires and motives, the “exact nature of my wrongs”. I let Step Seven “work me”. I **abandon** “all of me” to God’s “strength” to change my motives and desires, both the ones I know and the ones I don’t know.*

Next Time, Step Eight: “Faith without Works is Dead.” “Made a List”; “Became Willing”.