

**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 Twelve: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (p. 60)

Step Twelve, Part 1. “... we tried to carry this message to alcoholics ...” “
“Carry this message to other alcoholics! You can help when no one else can.” (p. 89)
“... insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics.” (p. 89)

How does “work with other alcoholics” help keep me from drinking? Because when I *try* to “carry the message” of my spiritual awakening to another alcoholic, I am letting God help me keep my spiritual awakening, *and me*, in “fit spiritual condition”. (see Steps 10 and 11)

Our “measure of success” in Twelve Step work is our continuing willingness to try to help another alcoholic find the spiritual solution for themselves by sharing our alcoholic problem and spiritual solution with them—whether they stop drinking or not.

*I am **powerless** over another person’s recovery. Step Twelve does not say that I get them sober!*

*I **abandon** myself to God in Step Twelve. I try to help other alcoholics find spiritual recovery. I share with them my story of hopelessness and **liberating** recovery from “self-will run riot”.*

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Step Twelve, Part 1. “... we tried to carry this message [the message of our personal spiritual awakening] to alcoholics.”

How I am powerless over another alcoholic in Twelve Step work:

- “If he does not want to stop drinking, don’t waste time trying to persuade him.” (p. 90)
“... wait till he goes on a binge ... wait for the end of the spree ... a lucid interval.” “

“... glad to talk to him if he cares to see you ... never force yourself on him.” “

“... careful not to brand him an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion.” (p. 92)
“... *he does not have to agree with with your conception of God.*” (p. 93)
“You should not be offended if he wants to call it off ...” (p. 94)
“... why he need not follow all the program ... do not contradict such views.” “
“... do not exhibit any passion for crusade or reform. Never talk down to ...” (p. 95)
“If he is not interested ... you may have to drop him ...” (p. 95)
“If he is to find God, the desire must come from within.” (p. 95)
“... do not insist upon it if he prefers to consult someone else.” (p. 96)
“... he can get well regardless of anyone ... trust God and clean house.” (p. 98)
“... his recovery ... is dependent upon his relationship with God.” (pp. 99-100)

How I abandon myself to God when working with another alcoholic in Twelve Step work:

- “Don’t start out as an evangelist or reformer.” (p. 89)
“So cooperate; never criticize.” “
“... one of a fellowship who, as part of their own recovery, try to help others ...” (p. 90)
“... talk to him about the hopelessness of alcoholism ... you offer a solution.” (p. 92)
“*Tell him exactly what happened to you. Stress the spiritual feature freely.*” (p. 93)
“... *willing to believe in a Power greater than himself ... live by spiritual principles.*” “
“To be vital, faith must be accompanied by self-sacrifice and unselfish, constructive action ... your story will help him see where he has failed ...” “
“Outline the program of action, explaining how you ... how you ... why you ...” (p. 94)
“We have no monopoly on God ... merely ... an approach that worked with us.” (p. 95)
“Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery.” (p. 97)
“... trust God and clean house.” (p. 98)
“... walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress ... in God’s hands ...” (p. 100)

A Step Twelve promise when I admit my **powerlessness** and **abandon** myself to God:

“... spiritually fit ... we can ... *if we have a legitimate reason for being there* ... be of maximum helpfulness to others ... keep on the firing line of life with these motives and God will keep you unharmed.” (pp. 100-102)

*We want control. God has control. I am better off seeking God rather than seeking control. I surrender control of my way. I **abandon** myself to God’s Way, especially in Twelve Step work.*

Next Time, Step Twelve Part 2. “We tried to Practice these Principles ...”