

**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 2.** “... [we tried] to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

*Alcoholics Anonymous contains many examples in Steps One through Eleven of how to successfully practice “powerlessness” and be “abandoned to God” in our relationships:*

“... resume a vital place in the lives of their families and communities.” (p. 15)

“... demonstration of our principles ... in our ... homes, occupations and affairs.” (p. 19)

“... family re-assembled ... began to work ... all went well for a time ...” (p. 35)

“... a way of life infinitely more satisfying and ... more useful ...” (p. 43)

“... attitude toward that Power ... revolutionary change in their way of living ...” (p. 50)

“... victory over them may bear witness to those I would help ...” (p. 63)

“We asked God ... take a kindly and tolerant view of each and every one.” (p. 67)

“We are in the world to play the role [God] assigns ... humbly rely on [God] ...” (p. 68)

“We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.” (p. 69)

“... [God] show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.” (p. 83)

“... we ask God ... Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (p. 84)

“So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.” (p. 88)

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*Chapters Eight through Eleven in Alcoholics Anonymous contain many constructive examples of how the spiritual attributes of **powerlessness** and **abandon ourselves to God** help us, and others, to be healthy—“spiritually fit”—in all our relationships.*

**Chapter 8. “To Wives”.**

*Examples and Consequences of Powerlessness—or its denial:*

“... hurt pride, frustration, self-pity, misunderstanding and fear.” (p. 104)

“... maudlin sympathy ... resentment ... run away ... hysterical ... terror ...” (p. 105)

“... homes ... battlegrounds ... seldom had friends ... financial [in]security.” “

“... other women ... bill collectors ... sheriffs ... the bums ...” (p. 106)

“Had we fully understood the ... alcoholic illness ... behaved differently.” (p. 107)

*Examples of Abandon ourselves utterly to God:*

“... adopt a spiritual way of life their road will be smoother.” (p. 114)

“If God can solve ... alcoholism, [God] can solve your problems too.” (p. 116)

“Patience, tolerance, understanding and love ... live and let live ...” (p. 118)

“When resentful thoughts come, try to pause and count your blessings.” (p. 119)

“... place the problem, along with everything else, in God’s hands.” (p. 120)

**Chapter 9. “The Family Afterward”.**

*More Examples and Consequences of Powerlessness—or its denial:*

“... highly strained, abnormal condition.” (p. 122)

“... heated argument, self-pity, self-justification or resentful criticism.” (p. 127)

“... jealous of a God who has stolen dad’s affections.” (p. 128)

“... dominated by a pathetic hardness and cynicism ... cannot forgive ...” (p. 134)

*More Examples of Abandon ourselves utterly to God:*

“... common ground of tolerance, understanding and love.” (p. 122, p. 125, p. 127)

“... in God’s hand, the dark past is the greatest possession you have ...” (p. 124)

“... spiritual experience ... forgave each other and drew closer together.” “

“... material well-being always followed spiritual progress ...” (p. 127)

“... sense of purpose ... consciousness of the power of God in our lives.” (p. 130)

**Chapter 10. “To Employers”.**

*More Examples and Consequences of Powerlessness—or its denial:*

“... I did not understand alcoholism.” (p. 137)

“... lack of understanding as to what really ails the alcoholic ...” (p. 139)

“... and lack of knowledge as to what part employers might take ...” “

“... greatest enemies ... resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear.” (p. 145)

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**Step Twelve, Part 2. “... [we tried] to practice these principles in all our affairs.” (con’t)**

**Chapter 10. “To Employers” (con’t)**

More examples of **Abandon ourselves utterly to God**:

- “We all had to place recovery above everything else ...” (p. 143)  
“... this book ... the employee may solve his problem.” (pp. 143-144)  
“If he is conscientiously following the program of recovery ...” (p. 147)

**Chapter 11. “A Vision for You”.**

More Examples and Consequences of **Powerlessness**—or its denial:

- “... heartbreaking obsession that some miracle of control ...” (p. 151)  
“... the hideous Four Horsemen—Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.” “  
“... unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it.” (p. 152)  
“... know loneliness ... be at the jumping-off place ... wish for the end.” “  
“... the old, insidious insanity—that first drink.” (p. 154)  
“... no amount of willpower he might muster could stop his drinking ...” (p. 155)  
“Hopelessness ... nothing would fix me. I’m a goner.” (p. 157)  
“He suffered horribly ... as if nothing could be done for him.” (p. 159)

More Examples of **Abandon ourselves utterly to God**:

- “... that God might give him mastery.” (p. 156)  
“ ‘God ought to be able to do anything.’ “ (p. 158)  
“... spiritual stuff makes sense. I’m ready to do business.” (p. 159)  
“... tapped a source of power much greater than yourself.” (p. 163)  
“**Abandon yourself to God as you understand God.**” (p. 164)

**Observations on “Admitted We were Powerless” to “Abandon Yourself to God”.**

1. The proper use of my will is to seek God’s will to set aside my will in favor of God’s will.
2. I suffer in my *powerlessness* until I admit my need to learn how to *abandon* myself to God.
3. I am better off seeking to *utterly abandon* myself to God than to seek control.
4. I am responsible to try to meet God’s expectations. God is not required to meet mine.
5. As I *abandon* more of myself to God, my acknowledgement of my *powerlessness* is rewarded with humility, forgiveness, gratitude, responsibility, tolerance and love.
6. I *live up to* my purpose of “maximum service” (p. 77) and *live in* my code of love and tolerance (p. 84) only when I acknowledge my *powerlessness* and *abandon* myself to God.
7. I *abandon* myself to God as I let God help me try to help others, even in my *powerlessness*.
8. I *abandon* my *powerless* illusion of ownership of others. I become a steward of God’s Power.
9. In my *powerlessness*, God entrusts me with sobriety and my spiritual awakening when i *abandon myself utterly to God*. God expects me to try to be “this message” to everyone.

**Next Time, on January 6, 2025: *Step One* of a New “Big Book” Twelve Step Study,  
“The Promises of the Twelve Steps—Our Proof of Spiritual Progress.”**