

**“WHAT AN ORDER! I CAN’T GO THROUGH WITH IT.”**

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop.

“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at 10 am CDT Fridays, from May 23 to June 6, 2025

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

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

“What an order! I can’t go through with it” is a typical reaction of many of us when presented with the summary of the Twelve Step spiritual program for recovery from alcoholism.

The reaction “What an order! I can’t go through with it” is not limited to the newcomer. Each of us, from time to time in our recovery, seem to experience this resistance—this denial and defiance—to something we are called to *do*, or *stop doing*, in the Twelve Steps.

Alcoholics Anonymous acknowledges this resistance. Step by step, we discover the reasons people have for resisting the method by which the book suggests we “take the steps”.

**“What an order! I can’t go through with it.”** (p. 60). What does the book mean by “order”?

“An ‘order’ is an authoritative command, direction or instruction.”

Alcoholics Anonymous certainly has *authority*, as it is based on the real experience of alcoholic men and women who suffered the life-threatening effects of the alcoholism illness—who also experienced the life-saving spiritual recovery program of the Twelve Steps. The “Big Book” has the *authority* of personal experience.

The Twelve Steps are not commands, as such, but they certainly provide *direction* and *instruction* for our spiritual recovery from alcoholism.

“An ‘order’ is an arrangement of actions to be taken in a particular sequence, pattern or method.”

The Twelve Steps are most effective when “taken” in the *sequence* (order) and with the *methods* as instructed in Alcoholics Anonymous.

I remember my days as a newcomer to AA in Kansas City. I read the steps on the wall of the P-3 AA Club. I did not like the idea of “powerless” or “unmanageable”. I did not lack “sanity”. I was not on good terms with God. The idea of “moral inventory” seemed excessive. Admitting my “wrongs” to another person seemed like they were being very nosy! There was God again in Steps 6 and 7! I was not going to make amends to people I had harmed, much less continue to admit I was wrong and ask God for help! What spiritual awakening? I just want to stop drinking! *I guess I can relate to “What an order! I can’t (or won’t) go through with it.”*

**Step One:** “**We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.**” (p. 59)

“The Preface”, “Forwards”, “The Doctor’s Opinion”, “Bill’s Story”, “There is a Solution”, “More about Alcoholism” and “We Agnostics” *convince me to “go through” with Step One:*

“... who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.” (p. xiii)

“... alcoholic talks with another alcoholic, sharing experience, strength, and hope.” (p. xxii)

“... action of alcohol ... manifestation of an allergy ... phenomenon of craving ...” (p. xxviii)

“Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by alcohol.” “

“... craving beyond their mental control.” (p. xxx)

“... seriously ill, bodily and mentally.” (p. 7)

“... lose all control of his liquor consumption, once he starts to drink.” (p. 21)

“... main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind ...”(“*I can’t go through with it.*”) (p. 23)

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (“*What an order!*”) (p. 30)

[The “unmanageable life” paragraph—“these bedevilements” ...] (p. 52)

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**Step Two: “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”** (p. 59)

“The Preface”, “Forwards”, “The Doctor’s Opinion”, “Bill’s Story”, “There is a Solution”, “More about Alcoholism” and “We Agnostics” *convince me to “go through” with Step Two:*

“... the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady ...” (p. xvi)

“... believe ... Power which pulls chronic alcoholics back from the gates of death.” (p. xxvii)

“... drinking to overcome a craving beyond their mental control.” (p. xxx)

“... though perhaps he came to scoff (*What an order!*), he may remain to pray.” (p. xxxii)

“... thought I could control the situation ... People feared for my sanity. So did I.” (p. 5, p. 7)

“... he had been committed for alcoholic insanity ... what had happened?” (p. 9)

“... God had done for him what he could not do for himself ... human will had failed.” (p. 11)

*“It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a Power greater than myself.”* (p. 12)

*“There is a solution ... accept spiritual help.”* (*“I can’t go through with it.”*) (p. 25)

“Some of our alcoholic readers may think they can do without spiritual help.” (p. 27)

“... he will control ... his drinking is the great obsession ... illusion ... delusion ...” (p. 30)

“All went well for a time, but he failed to enlarge his spiritual life.” (p. 35)

*“... all reasons for not drinking were easily pushed aside ... we call this plain insanity.”* (p. 37)

“To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis ...” (p. 44)

“... find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem.” (p. 45)

“... willingness to believe in a Power greater than ourselves ...” (p. 46)

“Faced with alcoholic destruction ... became ... open minded on spiritual matters ...” (p. 48)

“... consciousness of the Presence of God ... most important fact of their lives ...” (p. 51)

“God either is, or He isn’t. What was our choice to be?” (*“What an order!”*) (p. 53)

**Step Three: “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.”** (p. 59)

“Rarely have we seen a person fail [to enlarge their spiritual life] who has thoroughly followed our path [the Road of Happy Destiny, our Spiritual Awakening].” (p. 58)

“... incapable of being honest with themselves ...” (*“I can’t go through with it.”*) (p. 58)

“... want what we have ... willing to go to any length to get it ...” “

“We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not.” (*“What an order!”*) “

“Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recover ...” (pp. 59-60)

(Twelve Steps summarized on pp. 59-60)

“Many of us exclaimed, **‘What an order! I can’t go through with it.’**” (p. 60)

“Do not be discouraged ... spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” “

(c) That God could and would if He were sought.” (*“What an order!”*) “

“Being convinced, we were at Step Three ...” (p. 60)

(Pages 60-62 review our powerlessness over alcohol and our selfish, unmanageable lives. The “root of our troubles” is defined as “selfishness—self-centeredness” ... “self-will run riot, though [the alcoholic] usually doesn’t think so.”)

**Step Three Promises**, p. 63, help to *overcome* “What an order! I can’t go through with it.”

**Step Three Prayer**, p. 63, begins to *replace* “What an order! I can’t go through with it.”

**Next Time, Steps Four through Nine: Finding out How to “Go through with It”!**