

“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.

Each of us, from time to time in our recovery, seem to experience this *defiance* and/or *denial*, regarding something we are called *to do*, *or to 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 has the *authority* of 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 Twelve Steps, with the *authority* of personal experience, provide *direction* and *instruction* for our spiritual recovery from alcoholism.

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

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

New to AA, I read the steps on the wall of the P-3 AA Club in Kansas City. I disliked “powerless” or “unmanageable”. I did not lack “sanity”. I was not on good terms with God. A “moral inventory” seemed excessive. Admitting my “wrongs” to a person was them being nosy! There was God again in Steps 6 and 7! Why make amends to people I had harmed, much less continue to admit I was wrong and ask God for help! Spiritual awakening? I want to stop drinking! *I definitely understand “What an order! I can’t (or won’t) go through with it.”*

What in me tells me “I can’t go through with it”? I become willing in Steps One, Two and Three to ask God to help me “go through with it”, to relieve me of my “bondage of self”. I decide in Step Three to *learn how* to “go through with it”—to enable my spiritual awakening.

In Steps Four through Nine, I learn how “to go through with it.”

“Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked [God’s] protection and care with complete abandon.” (p. 59)

Three points are vital to success in each of the Steps going forward:

- 1. Each step warns me against using “half-measures” to avoid “going through with it”.*
- 2. In each step I face a turning point—to turn away from “I can’t go through with it”.*
- 3. In each step I find a way to “go through with”, asking God for care and direction.*

Step Four: “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” (p. 59)

“We searched out the flaws in our make-up which caused our failure.” (p. 64)

“To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got.” (p. 66)

“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (*I can’t go through with it.*) (p. 68)

“We subjected each relation to this test—was it selfish or not?” (*What an order!*) (p. 69)

I ask God to “save me from being angry”, to “remove [my] fear”, to “mold [my] ideals”.

I “go through with it”. I resist, but I write my Step Four inventory, with God’s help, anyway.

“... God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him.” (p. 71)

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Step Five: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” (p. 59)

“Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it ... trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path.” (p. 72)

“They only *thought* they had lost their egoism and fear ... humbled themselves.” (p. 73)

My self-reliance gives me excuses to avoid Step Five. I “go through with it anyway.”

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

“If we still cling to something [an ‘objectionable’ thing] we will not let go ...” (p. 76)

My self-will feeds my delusion that I don’t need help to “let go”. I ask God for help anyway!

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

“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. 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)

My pride and my fear tell me I can’t afford to trust God with “all of me”. I ask God to, anyway!

Step Eight: “Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.” (p. 59)

“We have a list of all persons we have harmed and to whom we are willing to make amends. We made it when we took inventory.” (p. 76)

My guilt, regret, remorse, shame, fear and pride tell me I don’t want this responsibility. It is too embarrassing, costly or dangerous to do so. I ask God for willingness to do it, anyway!

Step Nine: “Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.” (p. 59)

“Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past.” (p. 76)

“... business acquaintances and friends we have hurt ... “diffident” ...” (p. 76)

“... the man we hated ... he has done us more harm ...” (p. 77)

“Most alcoholics owe money. We do not dodge our creditors.” (p. 78)

“... committed a criminal offense ... may lose our position or reputation ...” (pp. 78-79)

“... other people are involved ... afraid it would destroy ... his partner ...” (pp. 79-80)

“... domestic troubles ... we have no right to involve another person.” (pp. 80-81)

“... at home ... [an alcoholic] is unthinking when he says sobriety is enough.” (p. 82)

Several times in Step Nine we ask God for help to “go through with it” anyway:

p. 77, “We go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ...”; p. 78, “... lose our fear of creditors ...”; p. 79, “... we ask [God] that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing ...”; p. 80, “... asked God to help ... placed the outcome in God’s hands ...”; p. 81, “... God willing, it shall not be repeated”; p. 83, “... asking ... that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness and love.”

“What an order! I can’t go through with it.” God and I together can go through with it!

Next Time, Steps Ten, Eleven Twelve: Find out How to Continue to “Go through with it.”