

**“We Admitted We Were Powerless” ... Over More Than Alcohol!**

An Alcoholics Anonymous “Big Book” Twelve Step Study Workshop  
“Threads of Recovery” on Zoom at noon CDT from July 7 to September 29, 2025

Facilitator: Bill H., St. Louis, MO

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

***We encounter a new “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in each of the Twelve Steps!***

- July 7. Introduction and  
Step One: “We admitted we were powerless over alcohol” - *physical allergy*.
- July 14. Step Two: We were powerless over alcohol - *mental obsession*.
- July 21. Step Three: We were powerless over *the bondage of self*.
- July 28. Step Four: We were powerless over *resentments, fear and inconsideration*.
- August 4. Step Five: We were powerless over *secrecy*.
- August 11. Step Six: We were powerless over our *objectionable* defects of character.
- August 18. Step Seven: We were powerless over the *removal* of our defects of character.
- August 25. Step Eight: We were powerless over our *unwillingness* to make amends.
- September 1. Step Nine: We were powerless over our *diffidence* to make direct amends.
- September 8. Step Ten: We are powerless over *spiritual complacency*, resulting in a return  
to living in *selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear*.
- September 15. Step Eleven: We are powerless over *taking God for granted*, resulting in a  
return to living with *self-seeking motives*.
- September 22. Step Twelve: We are powerless without keeping our *real reliance upon God*,  
resulting in indifference toward alcoholics and others.
- September 29. Review: How the “desperation of powerlessness” enables the on-going  
opportunity to enlarge our spiritual life, one step at a time.

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**Introduction.**

I have always been defiant. I never liked being told what to do—or what NOT to do!  
I have always been too self-reliant. I did not trust God, or anyone else. My “purpose” was to get my way in all things. My “code” was don’t get caught. I lived life; made choices; dealt with the consequences of my choices—as if I were “immortal and bulletproof”!

*The last thing I ever wanted was to feel hopeless or helpless—much less powerless!*

I finally reached the point of “a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body” (p. xiii) due to my defiant, self-centered living and drinking. I came to Alcoholics Anonymous, reluctantly, as a last resort. I could not “picture life ... either with alcohol or without it” (p. 152). I had hit my emotional and spiritual “bottom”. I believed I was *hopeless*. I felt *helpless* as never before.

I was first attracted to the *fellowship of AA*. It made no sense to me how people could enjoy such fun, peace and contentment without using alcohol—yet I kept coming back. Then my sponsor guided me through the *Twelve Step spiritual recovery program in the AA Big Book*.

The first words in the Twelve Steps are “We admitted we were powerless ...” (p. 59) I didn’t like that at all! But I grudgingly conceded that I was powerless when it came to alcohol.

In my years in recovery, God has disclosed to me that *I am powerless over more than just alcohol*. In this Big Book study, we discover how each one of the Twelve Steps guides us to *admit, accept and benefit from* an element in our lives over which we are powerless.

Admitting our natural human limitations of powerlessness leads us to seek help from a Power greater than ourselves. *We discover we are not hopeless or helpless. We simply have “less power” than we need to deal with life’s ups and downs on God’s terms, not just our own.*

*Each “new powerlessness” is an opportunity to enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our daily sobriety and enrich our life with more purpose, meaning and hope every day.*

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

(p. 59)

**My Physical Powerlessness over alcohol—which I admit ... and finally accept!**

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol” - *alcoholics have a physical allergy.*

“... chronic alcoholics ... allergy ... phenomenon of craving ...” (p. xxviii)

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

“They took a drink ...phenomenon of craving ... became paramount ...” (p. xxix)

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

“... real alcoholic ... lose all control ... once he starts to drink.” (p. 21)

**My Benefit of my Physical Powerlessness—my “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity”.**

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

“... their ideals must be grounded in a power greater than themselves ...” (p. xxviii)

“... experience an entire psychic change ...” (p. xxix)

“... though perhaps he came to scoff, he may remain to pray.” (p. xxxii)

“... I was interested. I had to be, for I was hopeless.” (p. 10)

**Next Time, Step Two: “... powerless over alcohol” - *alcoholics have a mental obsession.***