

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

**Introduction.**

I have always been defiant and too self-reliant. I did not trust God, or anyone else. My “purpose”: *get my way*. My “code”: *don’t get caught*. I lived life and made choices “*in control*”.

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

I was first attracted to the fun and good humor of the AA Fellowship. 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 admitted that I was powerless when it came to alcohol.

*I am powerless over more than alcohol*. Each of the Twelve Steps guides us to *admit*, *accept* and *benefit* from being powerless over other elements of our lives, in us and outside us.

Admitting and accepting natural human limitations of powerlessness leads us to continue to seek help from a Power greater than ourselves. *We are not helpless or hopeless. We simply have “less power” than we need to deal with life’s challenges on our power alone.*

***“Powerlessness” is an opportunity to benefit from spiritual help—without abdicating our responsibilities or our accountabilities—to enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our sobriety and enrich our life with purpose, meaning and hope each day.***

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

“Probably there are still some misgivings. As we look over the list of [people] we have hurt, we may feel diffident about going to some of them on a spiritual basis.” (p. 76)

*Page 76 in Alcoholics Anonymous is the definitive “willingness” page in the book!*

*In Step Six, I ask God for the willingness to “let go” of my objectionable defects.*

*In Step Seven, I am willing to ask God to take “all of me, good and bad”.*

*In Step Eight, I ask God for willingness “until it comes” to be responsible for my amends.*

*So I am willing—yet I still feel “diffident”. I lack confidence; I don’t trust myself.*

*I am “willing”, yet I still do not feel “able” to go to the people I harmed “on a spiritual basis”.*

***I am powerless to overcome my own “diffidence”, my feeling of inadequacy; my lack of confidence; my inability to feel “able” to make some of my direct amends. I benefit from my powerlessness over my “diffidence” in Step Nine by asking God for help.***

*When I feel “diffident”, inadequate and unable to make direct amends on a spiritual basis, I ask God to “grant me strength” to make me “able” as well as “willing”!*

***In Step Nine, I ask God to help me be willing AND able “until it comes”.***

***“... going to ... [the people we harmed] on a spiritual basis” is the focus of Step Nine.***  
In these first nine steps, we learn about, and come to use, the *three vital components of our spiritual awakening*:

1. ***Asking for (seeking)*** God’s help (God’s will);
2. ***Receiving (accepting)*** God’s help (God’s will);
3. ***Using*** God’s help (God’s will).

***My spiritual awakening grows when I decide to seek, accept and use God’s will.***

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

***My “powerless spiritual opportunity” in Step Nine is in asking God to help me overcome my “diffidence”, my inadequacy, my inability to feel “able” to make amends.***

*With my direct amends, I improve my spiritual awakening, my conscious contact with God, when I ask God to help me be responsible for the wrong things I have done (Step Eight) and ask God to help me be accountable to amend the harms I have done to others (Step Nine). We make our amends on a “spiritual basis”—with God’s help—no matter how they respond.*

**Some Types of Amends.**

“Business / friends” (pp. 76-77)

“Man we hated” (pp. 77-78)

“Alcoholics owe money” (p. 78)

“Criminal offense” (pp. 78-79)

“Other people” (pp. 79-80)

“Domestic troubles” (pp. 80-82)

“At home” (pp. 82-83)

**Spiritual Power to Overcome “Diffidence”: to be Able:**

“... sincere desire to set right the wrong.” (See p. 67)

“... sweep off our side ...” (*Restraint*) (p. 77)

“... go to him in a helpful and forgiving spirit ...” (See p. 67)

“His faults are not discussed.” (*Restraint*) (p. 78)

“... lose our fear of creditors ...” (See p. 68)

“We do not dodge our creditors.” (*Honesty*) (p. 78)

“... ask [God] that we be given strength ...” (See p. 76)

“We must not shrink at anything.” (*Courage*) (p. 79)

“... place the outcome in God’s hands ...” (See p. 76)

“... secure their consent ...” (*Consideration*) (p. 80)

“God willing, it shall not be repeated.” (See p. 70)

“... admit our fault.” (*Accountability*) (p. 81)

“... God] show us the way of patience, tolerance,

kindliness and love.” (See pp. 67, 68, 69, 70, 71)

“... let by-gones be by-gones.” (*Forgiveness*) (p. 82)

**Purpose:** “... fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

*We make direct amends—are more “fit” spiritually—with relief from our self-bondage of:*

*Pride - freeing me from denying the fact that I’ve even done anything wrong;*

*Guilt - freeing me from avoiding my responsibility for doing wrong things;*

*Regret - freeing me from feeling I “missed my chance” to do the right thing;*

*Remorse - freeing me from self-pity—I “did” wrong things so I “am” a wrong thing;*

*Shame - freeing me from ignoring the need for forgiveness of myself and others;*

*Fear - freeing me from my illusion that my self-reliance should be enough.*

**“The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it!”** (p. 83)

“Our behavior will convince them more than our words.” “

“... some wrongs we can never fully right ... we would right them if we could.” “

**“Promises” for Seeking God’s Help to overcome my Powerlessness over “Diffidence”:**

“If we are painstaking about this phase of our [spiritual] development ...

God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.” (pp. 83-84)

**“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.)

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### **A POWERLESSNESS PRAYER**

God, I thank You and AA for helping me admit that I am powerless over more than just alcohol.

God, I thank You and AA for disclosing to me that I am powerless over my “bondage of self”.

God, I thank You and AA for guiding me to work Steps Four through Six to learn the “spiritual basis” of *seeking*, *accepting* and *using* Your help to become willing to learn to live without my angers, resentments, fears and inconsiderate treatment of others. I am powerless to “let go” of my “objectionable things”, my defects of character, until I ask for, accept and use Your help.

God, I thank You and AA for disclosing to me in Step Seven that I am powerless to remove my “shortcomings” with my power alone. Thank You for guiding me to *seek*, *accept* and *use* Your Strength to gain freedom from my “bondage of self” by trusting You with the unknown and the uncertain things in my life “as I go out from here to do Your bidding”.

God, I thank You and AA for granting me strength in Steps Eight and Nine to overcome my powerlessness to take responsibility for my wrongs, and be accountable to those I have harmed—so that with Your strength I become both *willing* and *able* to make my direct amends.

Amen.

**Next Time, Step Ten: *Powerless over “selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear”.***