

**“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  
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(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!***

**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—to enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our sobriety and enrich our life with purpose, meaning and hope each day.***

**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? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path.” (p. 72)

*My “new attitude” grows out of my Step Three prayer. I need help with my “self”:*

“God ... relieve me of the bondage of self.” (p. 63)

*My “new relationship” with “our Creator” grows in my Step Four prayers:*

“We asked God to help us show them ... tolerance, pity, and patience ....” (p. 67)

“How can I be helpful ... God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.” “

“God will show us how ... kindly and tolerant ...” “

“We ask [God] to remove our fear and what [God] would have us be.” (p. 68)

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

“In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter.” “

“... let God be the final judge ... better things ... we will be forgiven ...” (p. 70)

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

*I discover “the obstacles in my path” (self-centered resentments, anger, fears, inconsiderate treatment of others) by answering the Step Four questions on pp. 64-70:*

“We asked ourselves why we were angry.” (p. 64)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?” (p. 67)

“Where were we to blame?” “

“Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (p. 68)

“Where had we been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?” (p. 69)

“Where were we at fault ...?” “

“... have the honest desire to let God take us to better things ...” (p. 70)

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

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

“This is perhaps difficult ... discussing our defects with another person ... solitary self-appraisal insufficient ... tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives ... avoid this humbling experience ... they never completed their housecleaning.” (pp. 72-73)

**Step Five discloses to me that I am powerless over my desire for secrecy about myself.**

“... had not learned enough of humility, fearlessness and honesty ...” (p. 73)

“... the alcoholic leads a double life ... memories are a nightmare ... pushes these memories far inside himself ... hopes they will never see the light of day ... constant fear and tension ... seldom told them the whole truth ... unwilling to be honest ...” “

**What is my “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in Step Five?**

“We must be entirely honest with somebody if we expect to live ... happily ...” (pp. 73-74)

*Step Five enables me to let go of my secrecy that has been blocking me from God’s care!*

**What kind of person do I look for to help me overcome my powerlessness over secrecy?**

“... understand our problem ... understanding friend ... doctor or psychologist ...” (p. 74)

“... our story we tell to someone who will understand, yet be unaffected.” “

“... keep a confidence ... understand and approve ... honored by our confidence.” (p. 75)

*During my Step Five discussion, a trusted person helps me understand my motives!*

**Step Five.** “We pocket our pride and go to it, illuminating every twist of character, every dark cranny of the past.” (God help me “pocket my pride”, and fear.) (p. 75)

*I admit I am powerless over my desire for secrecy. I accept my need for God’s care and another person’s help to remove my secrecy obsession—another obstacle in the path of my spiritual awakening. I seek the help of an understanding person to hear and interpret my Fifth Step. I experience the liberating spiritual benefit of telling the truth!*

**Step Five Promises.** “Once we have taken this step, we are delighted ...” (p. 75)

**Observations.**

1. “New attitude”: my willingness to seek, receive and use help from God and another person.
2. “New relationship with our Creator”: *God is in charge*—not me, another person or alcohol.
3. In Steps One through Four, I learn to trust God. In Step Five, I learn to trust another person.
4. The person hearing my Step Five helps me understand the real “obstacles” in my spiritual path—my *desires* and *motives* hidden by my resentments, anger, fears and selfishness.
5. Resentments and anger feed my illusion of control, blocking my ability to pause, listen, hear, think, accept or forgive. Fear makes me feel helpless and hopeless. Selfishness rules.
6. In Step Four, I learn *what I did*. In Step Five, I learn why I did what I did.
6. The person hearing my Fifth Step *listens with love*, helping me see my *desires* and *motives*.
7. Step Five helps me stop living in the “already” and the “not yet”. *I begin to live in the “now”!*

**Next Time, Step Six: We are powerless over our “objectionable” defects of character.**