

**“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!***

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

“If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at *Step Six*.” (p. 76)

We begin Step Six by answering the five questions on the lower half of p. 75:

“... we ask if we have omitted anything ...”	<i>Have I omitted prayer?</i>
“Is our work solid so far?”	<i>Have I told the truth?</i>
“Are the stones properly in place?”	<i>Have I lied?”</i>
“Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation?”	<i>Have I told partial truth?</i>
“Have we tried to make mortar without sand?”	<i>Have I admitted motives?</i>

“We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable.” (*How do we “were”?*) (p. 76)

“... unwilling to admit that he cannot take a drink.” (p. xxx)

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

“Most of us have been unwilling to admit we were real alcoholics.” (See p. 21) (p. 30)

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

“... is willing to believe ... he is on his way.” (See Appendix II, p. 568) (p. 47)

“Circumstances made him willing to believe.” (p. 57)

“... willing to grow along spiritual lines ... turn our will and our life over to God ..” (p. 60)

“... admitted our wrongs ... willing to set these matters straight.” (p. 67)

“... we do as we think [God] would have us, and humbly rely on [God] ...” (p. 68)

“... willing to grow ... willing to make amends where we have done harm ...” (p. 69)

“... let God take us to better things ... willing to straighten out the past ...” (p. 70)

“... unwilling to be honest ...” (p. 73)

*Am I willing to learn to stop doing the “wrong thing” in my spiritual awakening; to experience the “displacements and rearrangements” of my “ideas, emotions, and attitudes”?* (p. 27)

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

*Our culture glorifies self-importance and self-reliance. My “self-will run riot” struggles with the idea of being powerless.. I am powerless over alcohol AND my objectionable “defects of character”. I need God’s help to stop doing the “wrong thing”; to “let go”; to learn to live without whatever it is IN ME that is blocking me from God’s care.*

- “... they cannot after a time differentiate the true from the false.” (p. xxviii)
- “... the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind ...” (p. 23)
- “... no effective mental defense ... defense must come from a Higher Power.” (p. 43)
- “... believe that our human intelligence was the last word ... vain of us ...” (p. 49)
- “... extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn’t think so.” (p. 62)
- “... self ... was what had defeated us ...” (p. 64)
- “We could not wish them away any more than alcohol.” (p. 66)
- “Wasn’t it because self-reliance failed us?” (p. 68)
- “... God can remove whatever self-will has blocked you off from Him.” (p. 71)

“Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—every one?” (p. 76)

**I am willing to admit I am powerless by myself to “let go” of my “objectionable” things.**

“If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.” (p. 76)

My Step Five discussion disclosed my “objectionable” things, the “exact nature” of my defects. Here are a few examples of asking God to help me “let go” in Step Six:

**RESENTMENT INVENTORY.**

Others were wrong—that was as far as I got.

(I am powerless over my self-righteous,

judgmental pride. I ask God for humility

and forgiveness.)

**STEP SIX PRAYER.**

God, please help me be willing to

*let go* of my anger.

God, please help me *let go* of my

desire to blame and shame others.

Amen.

**FEAR INVENTORY.**

Self-reliance is never enough.

(I am powerless over my fear. I ask God

for gratitude and willingness to trust God.)

**STEP SIX PRAYER.**

God, please help me *let go* of my

fear of uncertainty.

God, please help me *let go* of my

fear of trusting You. Amen.

**SEXUAL CONDUCT INVENTORY.**

Each of my relationships were centered on

my constant and immediate gratification.

(I ask God for relief from selfishness.)

**STEP SIX PRAYER.**

God, please help me *let go* of my

obsession with attention and

gratification. Amen.

*In Steps One through Six, I ask God for willingness to stop doing the next “wrong thing”.*

*In Step Seven, I will ask God for “Strength” to help me learn to do the next “right thing”.*

***I discover more “Spiritual Opportunity” in my powerlessness over myself!***

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**Observations on “Powerless Spiritual Opportunities” in Steps One through Six.**

1. More of my powerlessness is disclosed to me as I work the Steps. I admit I am *powerless over alcohol and my unmanageable life* in Step One, followed by coming to believe in my *powerlessness over my mental obsessions and my “bondage of self”* in Steps Two and Three. My *powerlessness over my resentments, anger, fears and my inconsiderate treatment of others* is disclosed to me in Step Four. I receive help with my *powerlessness over secrecy* in Step Five. In Step Six, I ask God for the willingness to “let go” of, to learn to live without, my *“objectionable” defects of character—over which I am also powerless*.
2. Step Six ends my *illusion of thinking I have total control over my life—* and my *delusion that my life is not unmanageable by me alone*.
3. In my Step Three prayer, I ask God for relief from my bondage of self and seek God’s Power, God’s Love and God’s Way of life (p. 63).  
*God’s Power is present in the Step Four prayers* (pp. 67-71) to help me with my powerlessness over my resentments, anger, fears and my inconsiderate treatment of others.  
*God’s Love is present in Step Five* (p. 75) as I gain freedom from my powerlessness over secrecy.  
*God’s Way of life is present in Step Six* as God helps me become willing to “let go” of my delusion that I am not powerless to stop doing the “wrong thing” (p. 76).
4. We don’t recover *from* powerlessness. We recover *in* our powerlessness, with God’s Power.
5. In Steps One through Six, God and AA use “external circumstances” to enable my internal spiritual healing as I accept more and more help with my powerlessness.
6. Admitting powerlessness helps me accept my human limitations. Limitations are “normal”, not shortcomings or punishments. Accepting my limitations motivates me to *seek God’s Power, receive God’s Love and desire to live God’s Way of life*.
7. Steps One through Six disclose how often I have used *pride* and *fear* as my “gods”. *Pride* is when I make myself “god”. *Fear* is when I make uncertainty my “god”. I accept that *I need God’s Power to overcome my powerlessness over my pride and my fear*.
8. Acceptance of my powerlessness in Steps One through Six is not an “endpoint”, but a transition phase of my spiritual growth. I become *aware, admit* and *accept* several areas of my powerlessness. I learn to *act* to “step aside” and put my trust first in God. My “Powerless Spiritual Opportunities” in Steps One through Six lead me to trust God.
9. I am grateful for the “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in Steps One through Six to accept God as my “new Employer” (p. 63)—to stop trying to change myself by myself!

**Next Time, Step Seven: Powerless over the *removal* of our defects of character.**