

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 participate in, and benefit from, continuing spiritual help—with responsibility and accountability—as we enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our sobriety and enrich each day with purpose, meaning and hope.

Step Eleven: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we *understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” (p. 59)

Step Eleven can be a confusing step. It can also be the most profound of all the Steps. I am confused when I make “prayer and meditation” the purpose of Step Eleven, instead of a continuing means to an end—to “improve our conscious contact with God”. My personal relationship with God grows when I seek ONLY God’s will for me and the power to carry it out.

Step Eleven is most profound when I focus on two new things in the step: seek God’s help to divorce my thinking from “self-seeking motives”; and to live on the “plane of inspiration”.

Step Eleven moves me from seeking God’s help with the “known” (Steps One through Six) and the “unknown” (Steps Seven through Ten) to seek God’s help with “unseen” inspiration!

My “powerless spiritual opportunity”, my purpose, in Step Eleven is to continue to seek God’s help daily, using meditation and prayer as the means to this end, to overcome my powerlessness over my “self-seeking motives” and seek God’s “unseen” inspiration.

On awakening ... we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it [our thinking] be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.” (p. 86)

“... thought-life ... much higher plane ... cleared of wrong motives.” “

“... ask God for inspiration ... thinking ... on the plane of inspiration.” (pp. 86-87)

Growing each day in my healthy spiritual relationship—my “conscious contact with God”—with Step Eleven is effective when I begin my day admitting my powerlessness over my “self-seeking motives”. My “powerless spiritual opportunity” each day is to seek God’s help “on awakening” and throughout the day, so that I learn how to live on the “plane of inspiration”.

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Step Eleven: “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.” (p. 59)
“On awakening ... we ask God ... be divorced ... from self-seeking motives.” (p. 86)
“... ask God for inspiration ... thinking ... on the plane of inspiration.” (pp. 86-87)
“We ask especially for freedom from self-will ...” (p. 87)
“We are careful never to pray for our own selfish ends.” “
(Step Ten) “Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear.
When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them, etc.” (p. 84)
“Every day ... carry the vision of God’s will into all our activities.” (p. 85)
“As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask [God] for the right thought or action ... [not] running the show ... ‘Thy will be done’.” (pp. 87-88)
“When we retire at night ... were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?” (p. 86)
“Were we thinking of ourselves ... or ... what we could do for others ...?” “

My “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” to “Improve our Conscious Contact” with God.

- * I wake up in “self” each day—human, imperfect, incomplete, selfish—desiring control.
- * I am powerless over myself, others and my healthy response to others—without God’s help!
- * I am humble enough to be grateful for, and not ashamed of, my need for God’s help.
- * On my own, I am powerless to know my self-seeking motives or to seek God’s inspiration.!
So how did I get to a point where I do this each day, even when I don’t want to—continuing to seek “conscious contact” with God’s help all day, each day, with prayer and meditation?
 1. I admitted I was powerless over alcohol (my physical allergy and my mental obsession).
 2. To “treat” my alcoholism, I first had to learn to live in “entire abstinence”. (p. xxx)
 3. I came to believe there was a Power greater than me that could “solve” my problem. (p. 45)
 4. Step Three: I ask God, in “conscious contact”, to relieve me of my “bondage of self”. (p. 63)
 5. Steps Four through Six: I grow my “conscious contact” with God with “a strenuous effort to face and be rid of” known things in me blocking me from God—resentments, fears, inconsiderate treatment of others, i.e., “objectionable” things. (pp. 64-76)
 6. Steps Seven through Ten: I grow my “conscious contact” with God asking for help with “unknown” things, such as the response of others to my amends, or when and where “selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear” will “crop up” during my day. (pp. 76-85)
 7. I am less “restless, irritable and discontented”. (p. xxviii)
I live with less “bondage of self”—less guilt, regret, remorse, shame, pride and fear. (p. 52)
 8. The *Hopeful Promises* are coming true in my life, as on pp. 63, 75, 83-84, 84-85, 88.
 9. Our Purpose: To be “fit to be of maximum service to God and the people about us”. (p. 77)
 10. Our Code. “Love and Tolerance of others”—a *decision* of my will, *with God’s help*. (p. 84)

We begin, and live, our day in prayer and meditation. We ask God to direct our thinking, divorcing it from self-seeking motives—one more of many “unknowns” God helps us with since Step Seven. As in every Step since Step One, we ask God to help us let go of something so that we can receive something new in its place. In Step Eleven, we ask God to help us live without self-seeking motives so that we can learn to live on the plane of “unseen” inspiration.

“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.

God, I thank You and AA for enabling me to be both *willing* and *able* to *ask* for, *accept* and *use* Your will as I continue to grow my participation in my spiritual growth with Step Ten.

God, I thank You and AA for creating in me a desire to continue to seek to grow my conscious contact with You each day as You help me set aside my self-seeking motives, over which I am powerless, and learn to live on the plane of Your inspiration.

Amen.

Next Time, Step Twelve: I am powerless unless I keep my real reliance upon God.