

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

**How the “desperation of powerlessness” enables our Spiritual Opportunity:**

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, good humor (and ice cream!) 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! *To be “powerless” meant I had to learn to make different choices!*

To admit I am powerless is to admit I need help. I do not want to admit that I need help. To need help is to be vulnerable—and to be vulnerable makes me feel unsafe and afraid.

When I grudgingly admit that I am powerless over alcohol, I first seek to deny, defy or overcome my powerlessness by my “self”. “Self-will run riot” tries to be in charge! (See p. 62)

*“Self-will run riot” is not my solution, but my problem.* I experience a “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body”. I become desperate enough to seek help for my “self-will run riot”, which is amplified by my powerlessness. I finally decide, in my powerlessness, to seek spiritual help from a Power greater than myself, God as I understand God, to solve my problem of “self-will run riot”. *This is my first decision in a “powerless spiritual opportunity”.*

*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.

*I continue to admit and accept natural human limitations of powerlessness. I continue to act, to decide to seek help from a Power greater than myself. I am not helpless or hopeless. I simply have “less power” than I need to deal with life’s challenges on my human power alone.*

***“Powerlessness” is an opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, continuing spiritual help—with decisions of responsibility and accountability—as we enlarge our spiritual life, ensure our sobriety and enrich each day with purpose, meaning and hope.***

**Step by Step, the “desperation of powerlessness” enables our Spiritual Opportunity:**

**Step One.** *I admit I am powerless over alcohol—the physical allergy.* (“abstinence”, p. xxx)

We trust God and trust what God provides to help us. When God provides a bow and arrow (i.e., sobriety) keep trusting God—but don’t throw away the bow and arrow!

**Step Two.** *I admit I am powerless over my mental obsession—my life is unmanageable.*

Spiritual growth occurs “inside” me and works its way to the “outside” of my life. (p. 27)

**Step Three.** *I am powerless over my “bondage of self”.*

Self-will says self-help is enough. “Powerlessness” tells me self-help is not enough.

Relief and release from my “bondage of self” begins with my “new Employer”. (p. 63)

Note: The Step Three Promises, *in past tense*, precede our Step Three prayer.

**Step Four.** *I am powerless over resentments, fears and inconsiderate treatment of others.*

God’s Way of life is possible with the help of God’s Power and God’s Love. (pp. 63-71)

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**Step by Step, the “desperation of powerlessness” enables our Spiritual Opportunity:**

**Step Five.** *I am powerless over my desire for secrecy.*

My security and serenity depend on God’s hold on me, not my hold on God.

“We feel we are ... walking hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe.” (p. 75)

Note: The Step Five Promises, *in present tense*, begin “we are delighted”.

**Step Six.** *I am powerless over letting go of my “objectionable” defects of character.* (p. 76)

There is “momentary” powerless, “situational” powerless and “permanent” powerless.

I need God’s help in all three to live with fewer of my objectionable defects of character.

**Step Seven.** *I am powerless over the removal of my defects of character by myself.* (p. 76)

God gives me what I need as God removes from me what I don’t need.

**Step Eight.** *I am powerless over my unwillingness to make some amends.* (p. 76)

I need God’s Power in addition to my power to live life on God’s terms, not mine.

**Step Nine.** *I am powerless over my diffidence to make certain direct amends.* (pp. 76-83)

Trusting God is a *decision* of my will, not my feelings—in good times and in adversity.

Note: The Step Nine Promises, *in future tense*, “materialize if we work for them”.

**Step Ten.** *I am powerless over my selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear.* (pp. 84-85)

My life today is not about what I do, but what I *decide* to let God do with me.

**Step Eleven.** *I am powerless over thinking and acting on self-seeking motives.* (pp. 85-88)

In my Spiritual Opportunity, God helps me with the Known, the Unknown

and the Unseen. I *decide* to seek and live on the *unseen* “plane of inspiration”.

I am free of the desperation of a “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body”.

I trust God to direct my thinking, inspire my choices (*decisions*), provide for my needs, help me when I am agitated or doubtful, i.e., my spiritual “discipline”.

“So we let God discipline us in the simple way we have just outlined.” (p. 88)

**Step Twelve.** *I am powerless without God’s Power to keep my real reliance upon God.*

(pp. 89-164)

“Conscious contact” makes it possible to carry out my “real purpose” and “our code”.

Everything God permits is for a purpose God has in mind. I thank God for God’s

gifts in times of prosperity; and I thank God for God’s care in times of adversity.

I waste less time and energy on relationships and situations over which I am powerless.

I try to use what God gives me each day—and admit when I don’t use the day well.

We seek God’s will for us, not always knowing what it may be. We seek it ANYWAY.

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**“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.)

*When I continue to ask God to help me ...  
and when I ask God to help me receive God’s help in God’s time and on God’s terms ...  
I then continue to seek and try to participate in enlarging my spiritual life ...  
so that I receive more spiritual help in the form of unseen inspiration and forgiveness ...  
enabling me to have some spiritual experience, strength and hope to share with others.*

**A POWERLESSNESS PRAYER**

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

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

God, I thank You 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 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 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 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 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. I thank You for forgiving my shortcomings.

God, I thank You for the spiritual opportunity each day to try to carry the message of my spiritual awakening to alcoholics and to try to practice the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps with every person in my life, as I keep my real reliance upon You to overcome my powerlessness to enlarge my spiritual life.

Amen.

**Next Time:**

**HOPE, the “Beacon” that lights the Path of our Spiritual Awakening, Step One.**