

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 Twelve: “Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

(p. 60)

“Many of us exclaimed, ‘What an order! I can’t go through with it.’ Do not be discouraged ... grow along spiritual lines ... we claim spiritual progress ...”

(p. 60)

After working eleven steps of “spiritual progress”, in which I have admitted, accepted and acted to seek spiritual help with several examples of my powerlessness, I am still powerless to work to enlarge my spiritual life unless I continue to seek and try to act so that my “real reliance is always upon [God]”. (See p. 35 and p. 164)

Alcoholics Anonymous guides us in Chapters 7 through 11 in *how, when, where* and *with whom* to keep our **real reliance always upon God**.

“... we tried to carry this message [of our spiritual awakening] to alcoholics ...”

Chapter 7, “WORKING WITH OTHERS”

(pp. 89-

103)

“Tell him exactly what happened to you ... willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he try to live by spiritual principles.”

(p. 93)

EXAMPLES OF “POWERLESS” SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES IN STEPS 1 - 11:

Step One: *Alcohol-physical allergy.*

Step Seven: *Removal of defects of character.*

Step Two: *Alcohol-mental obsession.*

Step Eight: *Unwillingness to make amends.*

Step Three: *Bondage of self.*

Step Nine: *Diffidence to make direct amends.*

Step Four: *Resentments, fears, incons.*

Step Ten: *Selfish, dishonest, resentments, fears.*

Step Five: *Secrecy.*

Step Eleven: *Self-seeking motives; inspiration.*

Step Six: *Objectionable defects.*

“Both you and the new man must walk day by day in the path of spiritual progress.” (p. 100)

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“... and [tried] to practice these principles on all our affairs.”

Chapter 8, “TO WIVES” (pp. 104-121)

“... no situation is too difficult and no unhappiness too great to be overcome.” (p. 104)

“The power of God goes deep.” (p. 114)

“... apparent calamity ... opened up a path which led to the discovery of God.” (p. 116)

“But it was a silly idea that we were too good to need God.” “

“Patience, tolerance, understanding and love ... live and let live ...” (p. 118)

“... place the problem, along with everything else, in God’s hands.” (p. 120)

Chapter 9, “THE FAMILY AFTERWARD” (pp. 122-135)

“... common ground of tolerance, understanding and love.” (p. 122)

“... in God’s hands, the dark past is the greatest possession you have ...” (p. 124)

“... spirit of love and tolerance.” (p. 125)

“... consciousness of the power of God in our lives.” (p. 130)

“We are sure God wants us to be happy, joyous, and free.” (p. 133)

“... we made our own misery, God didn’t do it ... demonstrate [God’s] omnipotence.” “

Chapter 10, “TO EMPLOYERS” (pp. 136-150)

“... lack of understanding of what really ails the alcoholic [*spiritual deficiency!*]” (p. 139)

“We all had to place recovery above everything ...” (p. 143)

“... solve his problem ... decide for himself ... use of the book ...” (p. 144)

“... conscientiously following the program of recovery ...” (p. 147)

Chapter 11, “A VISION FOR YOU” (pp. 151-164)

“... we tried to carry this message [of our spiritual awakening] to alcoholics ...”

“... get along without liquor ... substitute ... fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous.” (p. 152)

“His sanity returned and he thanked God.” (pp. 154-155)

“A spiritual experience, he conceded, was absolutely necessary ...” (p. 155)

“... have to face his problems squarely that God might give him mastery.” (pp. 155-156)

“The two friends spoke of their spiritual experience and ... course of action ...” (p. 157)

“God ought to be able to do anything ... begun to have a spiritual experience.” (p. 158)

“The way you fellows put this spiritual stuff makes sense.” (p. 159)

“... sober ... transcended by the happiness ... giving themselves for others.” “

“... and [tried] to practice these principles on all our affairs.”

“See to it that your relationship with [God] is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us.” (p. 164)

“... so you must remember that your real reliance is always upon [God].” (p. 164)

“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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*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 ...
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.

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, How the “desperation of powerlessness” enables our “Spiritual Opportunity”.