

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 Ten: “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” (p. 59)

“Though our decision was a vital and crucial step, it could have little permanent effect unless at once followed by a strenuous effort to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us ... we started upon a personal inventory.” (p. 64)

“Our decision” is Step Three. Our “personal inventory ... to face, and to be rid of, the things in ourselves which had been blocking us” from God’s help is Steps Four through Nine.

In Step Ten, I “continue” to apply the spiritual principles of Steps Three through Nine.

It is my “powerless” human nature to be selfish, dishonest, resentful and afraid, so my “powerless spiritual opportunity” is to grow in God’s Power and Love daily in Step Ten.

“... these extravagant promises ... will always materialize if we work for them.” (p. 84)

“This thought brings us to *Step Ten* ... we continue to take personal inventory ... continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along ... continue for our lifetime ... continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear.” (p. 84)

“When these crop up,	Step 4.	“
we ask God at once to remove them.	Steps 3, 6, 7.	
We discuss them with someone immediately and	Step 5.	
make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone.	Steps 8, 9.	
Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.	Our “Purpose”, p. 77	

Notice the sense of purpose, a vital sense of urgency: “continue”, “continue”, “continue”, “at once”, “immediately”, “quickly”, “resolutely”.

I grow my spiritual relationship with God daily in Step Ten when I continue to ask for, accept and use God’s help throughout each day—my “powerless spiritual opportunity”.

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Step Ten: “Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” (p. 59)

More Promises when I Participate in my “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity” in Step Ten.

When I continue to ask for, accept and use God’s help all day each day to restrain, or even live free of, my natural selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fears—as well as amend wrongs when they do occur—I experience more of my “powerless spiritual opportunity”:

“... we have ceased fighting anything or anyone—even alcohol.” (p. 84)

“... sanity will have returned.” “

“... we recoil from [liquor] as from a hot flame.” “

“... react sanely and normally ...” (p. 85)

“We are neither cocky nor are we afraid.” “

“This is how we react so long as we keep in fit spiritual condition.” “

A Cautionary Warning if I Fail to Participate in my “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity”.

“It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do ... we are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition.” (p. 85)

Even More Reinforcement for me to Participate in my “Powerless Spiritual Opportunity”.

“Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God’s will into all of our activities. ‘How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done’. These are thoughts which must go with us constantly ... exercise our will power along this line ... proper use of the will.” (p. 85)

“Step Ten ... way of living ... day by day ... sober ... emotional balance ...” (12x12, p. 88)

Our Real Purpose.

“... fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” (p. 77)

Our Code.

“Love and tolerance of others is our code.” (p. 84)

Observations.

1. I did not ask to have alcoholism. Yet, I am *responsible* to seek God’s help with my illness.
2. When I *continue* to work Step Ten each day, God helps me treat my “bedevilmments”. (p. 54)
3. It is the proper use of my *will* to ask God to help me be *willing* to ask for God’s help.
4. I grow my *trust* in God’s will to help me the more I ask God to help me.
5. Becoming “fit” to be of service to God and others *is* spiritual progress, not perfection.
6. To “do the next right thing”, I begin by asking God to help me “not do the next wrong thing”.
7. I *trust* God to work in my life to further God’s will for me—even when it differs from my will.
8. God helps me change the way I deal with selfishness, dishonesty, resentments and fears.
9. God’s Way is what God wants to do *with me*, *for me* and *through me* to help me and others.
10. I am only “playing” to an audience of One—seeking God’s will, not the approval of others.
11. We use Step Ten each day to trust God as we live between the “already” and the “not yet”.
12. **Love**—wanting God’s best for them. **Tolerance**—accept and encourage them as they are.

“Let us love not merely in theory or in words—let us love in sincerity and practice.”

Anon.

“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.

Amen.

Next Time, Step Eleven: “We are powerless over our self-seeking motives.”